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# THE SEETHING POT

BY

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

FIFTH IMPRESSION

LONDON

EDWARD ARNOLD

41 & 43 MADDOX STREET, BOND STREET, W.

1906

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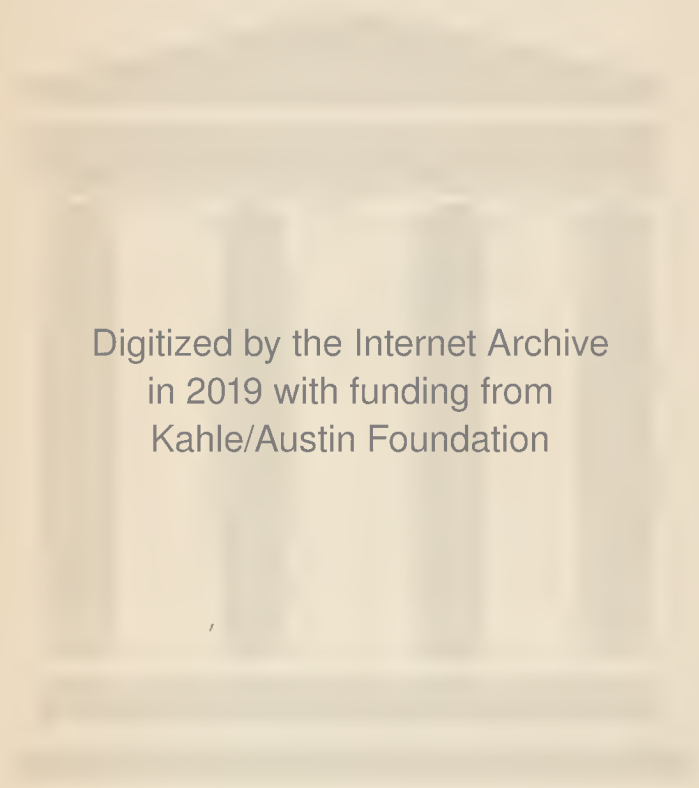
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# THE SEETHING POT

## PROLOGUE

THE December afternoon darkened rapidly over the crowd which had gathered round the court-house door. Inside the gloom prevented men from seeing each other's faces, and lights were sent for before the last act of the day's drama commenced. Two candles were brought and set upon the table before the judge. They illuminated the papers which lay before him, made his robes and wig visible, and even cast a few straggling rays upon the face of the prisoner. The rest of the court seemed only darker for their presence.

‘Gerald Geoghegan,’ said the judge, ‘you have been found guilty of taking up arms in open rebellion against your lawful Sovereign, Queen Victoria, in this her kingdom of Ireland. Your crime is one which in an ignorant peasant might move our pity, might be found, perhaps, to have some shadow, not of justification, but excuse. But you are a member of a Church which has always inculcated loyalty upon her children

as a sacred duty, and taught the sinfulness of rebellion. You have enjoyed the advantages of an education which should have shown you the folly of the attempt which you have made. You are a member of a class whose traditional boast it has been that they are England's garrison in this country. In your case, therefore, there is no plea to be urged in palliation of your monstrous crime. I sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you be dead, in the market-place of this town. I direct that your body be cut into four by the common hangman, the portions afterwards to be disposed of in accordance with the pleasure of Her Majesty. May the Lord have mercy upon your soul.'

They led the prisoner away.

It had been a poor business at the best, the rebellion of Gerald Geoghegan. He had led a dwindling band of half-starved peasants among the by-roads of Tipperary. He had fired upon a police patrol. He had surrendered himself to a country magistrate. That was the whole story. It was saved from being a subject of laughter for the nations only by the ferocity of the judge's sentence. For a few days Gerald Geoghegan hugged the consolation that at least he was to be allowed to die. In the end even this was taken from him. His sentence was changed into one of transportation for life. He sailed for Australia in a convict ship, the last and the most ineffective of the long line of those who have drawn the sword for Ireland.

His brother, Sir Thomas Geoghegan of Clogher, heard of his exile without a word, and received his last letter without reading it. He had disowned Gerald when he first declared himself a member of the Young Ireland party. He determined after the fiasco of the rebellion not to speak, and if possible not to hear, his name again.

Australia proved a kinder land to Gerald Geoghegan than Ireland had been. It had no wrongs to lure him into desperate politics. He worked, and as an old man reaped a harvest for his toil. A farm prospered with him. A gentle wife helped his old age to slip peacefully away. A younger Gerald grew up to be a hopeful boy before the end came for 'Geoghegan the rebel.'

## CHAPTER I

WHEN Sir Giles Geoghegan died, his title passed to his cousin Gerald, who lived on an Australian farm. The estates and the personal property went with the title, because Sir Giles had been more or less imbecile all his life, and no one had ever urged him to make a will. The news of the inheritance came as a surprise to Gerald Geoghegan. His father had never talked much about his Irish relations, and, although Gerald had somehow gathered that he belonged to a family of which there was no need to be ashamed, he was quite unaware that he stood next in succession to the baronetcy and the Clogher estate.

It is not to be wondered at that he made the journey from Melbourne as quickly as possible. It seemed to him, in spite of all he could do, to be interminable. In London his excitement rose to fever-heat, and even when at last he seated himself in the Irish mail, he fretted with impatience. For Sir Gerald Geoghegan was young, barely five-and-twenty, and the prospect of taking up the position of a great landed proprietor and a very wealthy man is one which might shake the equanimity of a gray-haired philosopher. He had

one fellow-traveller in his compartment, a thin, sharp-faced man whose clothes and figure suggested a groom. Sir Gerald spoke to him, because in his excitement he could not remain silent.

‘I suppose this train runs pretty punctually to Holyhead.’

The other man looked up from his paper.

‘Yes; and the steamer is punctual, too. You will be in Dublin at five o’clock.’

As he spoke he looked steadily at Sir Gerald. His face developed curious tangles of wrinkles round the eyes and mouth, and he ceased to look like a groom.

‘I think I’m safe in guessing,’ he added, after a pause, ‘that you are an Irishman.’

‘I suppose I am,’ said Sir Gerald—‘at least, my father was; but I’ve never set foot in the country in my life. What made you think I was Irish? I can hardly have inherited a brogue.’

‘Well,’ said the other, ‘I have studied human types a bit. I guess wrong pretty frequently, but when I see a man with a narrow head, deep-set eyes that are nearly black, straight dark hair, a figure and hands like yours, I can’t be far out in saying “Irishman.” I’ll go further if you like, and say you’re a Celt, and a Connaught Celt. Am I right?’

‘I dare say you are. To tell you the truth, I don’t know. I’m going to Connaught, anyhow—to Mayo—and I call it going home.’

‘The type has a wonderful way of impressing

itself. Your people may have married Englishwomen for generations, or they may have been English themselves and married Irishwomen. It makes no matter. The Celtic type is the dominant one. It works itself into any strain and stays.'

'You seem to know something about Ireland,' said Sir Gerald.

'Well, I ought to,' said the other. 'I've done nothing all my life but think about Ireland and talk about Ireland—chiefly the latter. Let me introduce myself. My name is Desmond O'Hara. I'm the editor and owner of *The Critic*.'

He drew himself up as he spoke, and the wrinkles gathered with extraordinary thickness over his face.

'Oh!' said Sir Gerald. 'I'm very glad to meet you.'

'You don't seem to be much impressed,' said O'Hara, and it would have been hard to tell whether he was offended or amused by the vagueness of Sir Gerald's tone. 'Perhaps you don't read *The Critic*. You ought to if you are an Irishman.'

'I've never come across it, but, you see, I've lived all my life in Australia.'

'That's no excuse. I've several readers in Australia—three, I think. Anyhow, you can begin to read it now. *The Critic* represents the intellect of Ireland. It aims at bringing all the people in the country who can think into touch with each other. The price is twopence a week, but I give it for a penny to anyone who can't afford more.'

Sir Gerald smiled.

‘I dare say my finances will stand the regular subscription,’ he said.

‘Good,’ said O’Hara. ‘Then, you’ll subscribe regularly. I can’t think why on earth people are fools enough to buy my paper, but quite a surprising number of them do. It isn’t worth twopence, you know. It’s nothing on earth but talk spread over paper in big print, and very poor talk at that.’

‘I thought,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘that you represented the intellect of Ireland.’

‘I don’t know who you are, but you ought to be aware that there is no intellect in Ireland. From the Provost of Trinity in his hall to the farmer’s daughter behind the dunghill there is not one single individual that can, properly speaking, be said to think.’

Sir Gerald began to suspect that he had stumbled upon a lunatic, but O’Hara’s laugh reassured him. It was an eminently sane and wholesome laugh.

‘Don’t look so serious,’ he said. ‘That’s only one of my tricks, designed to produce thought. I printed that remark in *The Critic* about three months ago. I had just recovered from influenza at the time, and felt depressed. By the way, if I am to send you the paper, you must tell me who you are and where you live. “Celt, Connaught,” would hardly find you, though you are a type.’

‘Gerald Geoghegan—I mean, Sir Gerald Geoghegan’—he reddened as he made the correction—‘Clogher House, County Mayo.’

‘Surely,’ said O’Hara, ‘you’re not—I didn’t hear that poor Sir Giles was dead. You must be the son of Gerald Geoghegan the——’ He paused.

‘Of Gerald Geoghegan the rebel, you were going to say. You needn’t have hesitated; I am not ashamed of my father or of anything he did.’

‘Ashamed! Indeed I should think not. You ought to be puffed up with pride in such a father. He was the last great Irish gentleman. You know his story, of course?’

‘Yes,’ said Sir Gerald: ‘he told it me himself out there, before he died. He said he’d been a fool.’

‘Of course he was a fool, as we count fools. A man is a fool to set up a few starved peasants against the power of England; but that kind of fool is the only thing worth being in the world. Don’t think I’m advising you to go and do likewise. The thing is not to be done that way now. We’ve got on to a new track. We’re working out salvation another way.’

‘Tell me. I want to know about Ireland. You see, I’m going to live there.’

‘This train only takes six hours to get to Holyhead. After that I shall tell you nothing, for I shall be infernally sea-sick. I always am. No mortal man could explain Ireland to you in six hours.’

‘Tell me something—tell me what an Irish landlord ought to do, and how he ought to live.’

The task suited O’Hara exactly. *The Critic* was accustomed from time to time to wander into the

regions of archæology for a week or two. Sometimes several numbers were devoted entirely to folk-lore, or the industrial revival, or the Irish language. Once it seemed likely to turn into a kind of almanac for amateur gardeners. It always returned, however, to the subject of landlords, their prospects and duties, their sins and mistakes. Its true position was that of candid friend to the unfortunate class whom England in self-defence is being obliged to squeeze out of existence.

O'Hara rubbed his hands, and began :

‘You are an Irish gentleman, Sir Gerald, and therefore one of the natural leaders of the Irish people.’

‘Excuse my interrupting you,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘but isn’t that a little mediæval—out of date, you know? Of course, I may be prejudiced, coming from Australia, but I always thought that the idea of a gentleman, as a gentleman, being a leader had quite passed out of existence everywhere, especially, perhaps, in Ireland.’

‘Now, there you’re mistaken entirely. Don’t you go starting life in Ireland with any of those fine democratic one-man’s-as-good-as-another notions. They may be all right in the colonies. They are good enough for trotting out at election times to the British working man; but they’re no kind of use in Ireland. We’re an aristocratic people, and we’re loyal to our leaders. We don’t set up to be independent sons of toil or any nonsense of that sort.

Unfortunately, our gentry, our aristocracy, stand out and won't lead us, so we fall back on priests and politicians. Leaders of one sort or another we must have, and we ought to have you and your class.'

'Well?' said Sir Gerald. 'Go on.'

O'Hara went on. The train flew through the midlands while he discoursed on the part the landed aristocracy ought to take in the industrial revival. He sang the praises of Irish manufacturers. Clogher House ought to be furnished with Donegal carpets; its chairs, tables, and sofas could be made in Dublin; linen of every kind must of course come from Belfast; the floors should be washed with Irish soap; the housemaid's caps could be best stiffened with Irish starch. Sir Gerald himself ought to smoke Irish manufactured tobacco, and light his pipe with an Irish match.

'A man like you,' the editor continued, 'who own a great estate, and therefore pay your bills, is in a position to bully his tailor. I can't, of course; I can only differentially persuade. But I've got these trousers made of Irish tweed. Look at them!'

He stretched out a pair of lean legs, round which a yellowish tweed hung despondingly. The material may have been all right, but the garments did not advertise the merits of O'Hara's tailor.

'You,' he continued, 'ought to be dressed from head to foot in Irish flannel, Irish tweed, and Irish socks. What's that you're smoking? An English-made pipe. Now, to-morrow I'll show you a shop in

Dublin where you can get every kind of pipe, from a briar to a meerschaum, made at home.'

During luncheon O'Hara passed on to the question of the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland. He admitted that the public had lost interest in the matter.

'We had our chance,' he said, 'and we missed it. All the same, you oughtn't to forget the fact that England is robbing us systematically of three millions a year. The thing is as plain as daylight.'

It may have been plain in itself, but O'Hara's way of presenting the facts tended to confuse his pupil's mind. Immense sums of money had a way of transforming themselves into decimals per head which bewildered him. A conception which recurred at short intervals in the editor's discourse under the title of 'taxable capacity' gradually lost the vague meaning it at first seemed to have, and mixed itself hopelessly with other things called 'standards of value.'

'I'm afraid,' said Sir Gerald, 'I shall have to read the subject up a bit. I don't seem to master it.'

'There's not the least necessity to master it,' said O'Hara. 'Look here.' He seized a loaf from the attendant who passed down the car. 'Here's a parcel of tea. Here's another.' He balanced a potato in a spoon. 'All you've got to do is to go round the country showing the small parcel first. "This," you say, "is the amount of tea you get at present for two shillings. This"—here you show the large parcel—

"is what you ought to get. And England takes the difference." Why, you would have all Ireland at your back in a week, and be in a position to dictate terms to any Chancellor of the Exchequer who ever framed a Budget.'

After lunch the two men returned to their smoking-carriage, and O'Hara started afresh.

'Of course the land question——'

'Ah!' said Sir Gerald, 'isn't that the real question—the thing that matters, I mean?'

'Certainly not,' said O'Hara. 'The land question is an accident. It is temporary. It might be settled to-morrow. The real thing is the nation. We must unite, nobles and commons, rich and poor, to preserve our nationality, to prevent the complete Anglicization of our country.'

'But union——' began Sir Gerald.

'Now, don't interrupt me. I know what you're going to say. Union is impossible—conflicting interests, and that sort of thing. I know all that, and it's not true, not a word of it. Ireland might be united, and there's one man who could effect the union if he chose.' O'Hara sank his voice impressively, and lifted his cap from his head with a certain reverence. 'The King,' he said.

Sir Gerald opened his mouth to speak, but only gasped. He hesitated between the laughter due to an extravagant jest and a feeling that O'Hara might be in earnest.

'I know what you're thinking,' said O'Hara:

‘you’ve got the usual notion of the King as a sort of glorified head of the Civil Service. Now, I dare say it’s different with England. The Lord alone knows how an Englishman likes to be governed. But Ireland can’t be ruled by cynical politicians in Secretaries’ offices, or noblemen who drive four-in-hand to Punchestown with pretty wives beside them. Ireland wants a King. Give us a King to love us, and we will be a united nation and loyal—not loyal, mind you, to that system of government by people with long tongues and no consciences that’s called the British Constitution, but loyal to the throne and to ourselves.’

O’Hara proceeded to demonstrate from history the loyalty of the Irish. He succeeded in giving a series of curious twists to established facts. The names ‘rebel’ and ‘loyalist’ got tacked on to quite unusual parties. Sir Gerald was deeply interested. It appeared that various heroes, from Silken Thomas down to Wolfe Tone, whom he had regarded, not without sympathy and admiration, as rebels, were in reality the only faithful servants of the Kings of Ireland. Unfortunately, just as O’Hara had reached the point where Sir Gerald’s father attempted to alter the course of Irish history, the train steamed into Holyhead.

O’Hara sighed. ‘Good-bye,’ he said. ‘I shan’t see you again. I don’t care how calm it is, I’m bound to be hideously sick. In half an hour my principles will have given way to the wish that some English engineer had succeeded in consummating

the union between the two countries by building a bridge.'

'Stop a minute,' said Sir Gerald; 'I want to see you again. Won't you give me your address, and let me call on you?'

O'Hara handed him an envelope. 'There's my office address. My house is away out at Dalkey. Come and see me to-morrow. I'll take you to a show, if you like, where you'll meet some of the intellect of Ireland. Good-bye; I must hasten to find a place where I may hide my shame.'

Sir Gerald stood awhile watching the porters hurrying on board with mail-bags and trunks. Soon the steamer slipped from the pier, and the wind blew the great columns of her smoke flat across the wavelets of the harbour. For a time he watched the land behind him grow dim, and then turned his face westwards for the first glimpse of the Irish shore. All his life he had dreamed of this coming home. It had always been as home that he had thought of Ireland. As a child he had wondered vaguely at the pathetic reverence with which his father spoke of home. A spiritualized Ireland was associated with the prayers and creed his mother taught him. He had listened to his father's evening readings of Mangan's verses until he learnt to repeat them for himself. In lonely places he found expression for the passions which fill the souls of boys by shouting aloud Red Hugh O'Donnell's dedication of himself to the service of the Dark Rosalcen. As he grew older his father's teach-

ing made him familiar with the hopes and ideals of Thomas Davis and the Young Ireland party. His day-dreams were of a return to take up the dropped thread of *The Nation's* work. He had pictured to himself a life spent in his country's service, a beginning in obscurity and poverty, a rising to influence and fame. After his father's death, contact with the actual conditions of life's struggle sobered his dreams. He no longer thought of himself as one of Ireland's heroes, but his love for her remained strong in him. Then came the great surprise of his inheritance. He realized suddenly that he was indeed to return to Ireland, and that, not as an unknown adventurer, but as a great man, the owner of a vast estate, the bearer of an ancient title. Of the actual Ireland of to-day he knew next to nothing, but his old dreams came back to him, and on the voyage home he found himself again sketching out an heroic future. Ireland was spiritualized once more. She looked for his coming, awaiting him—'The young deliverer of Kathleen-ni-Houlahan.'

O'Hara's talk in the train had bewildered and excited him. Already the service of Ireland ceased to seem a very simple thing. He was vaguely conscious of great conflicting interests which he did not understand. Then that talk about the King!—that was wholly new to him. It made a certain appeal to the romance in him, and yet he distrusted it. His father had not taught him to reverence the throne of an English monarch.

After the arrival of the steamer at Kingstown, a friendly fellow-traveller pointed him out the obelisk which marks the place where George IV. landed. It seemed a perfect refutation of O'Hara's fantastic theory of loyalty, that the only Hanoverian monarch who was ever popular in Ireland should have left his mark upon the country in a stone monument, and the change of a name from Dunleary to Kingstown.

## CHAPTER II

SIR GERALD determined to postpone his journey to Clogher, and spend a day in Dublin in order to avail himself of O'Hara's invitation. He looked forward with some eagerness to meeting Irish intellectual people. The Young Ireland movement, of which his father had been one of the leaders, had created a genuinely Irish literature. He had learnt to admire the poetry and the essays in *The Nation*. He expected to meet the men and women upon whom the mantles of Davis and Mangan had fallen.

He arrived at the office of *The Critic* early in the afternoon, and found that the editor had not yet put in an appearance. The staff of the paper, which consisted of a sandy-haired young man with a Belfast accent, was endeavouring to brew himself a cup of tea with the help of a rather decrepit spirit-stove. Sir Gerald explained his business, and was invited to share the prospective tea with the utmost friendliness. Mr. Gamble—such, it appeared, was the youth's name—proved to be a most entertaining companion. He combined a naïve worship for O'Hara's literary ability with a complete contempt for his way of doing business.

Sir Gerald learnt, with some surprise, that O'Hara was not only the greatest writer in Ireland, but the only true political guide, and a prophet of righteousness whose genius amounted to inspiration.

'I can't write a bit myself,' said Mr. Gamble. 'Sometimes I do commercial articles on Irish manufactures, but they are deadly dull. We have a few other contributors, but they are not much use. O'Hara is *The Critic* himself; it's only his writing that makes it go.'

Mr. Gamble was not, however, at all inclined to hide his own proper talents under a bushel. But for his incredible exertions in the matter of book-keeping and attracting advertisers, it appeared that O'Hara would long ago have found himself in the bankruptcy court. He got down a ledger with a view to giving Sir Gerald some illustrations of O'Hara's methods of keeping accounts, when the kettle suddenly boiled. Two cups and a tin of condensed milk were produced from Mr. Gamble's desk.

'I advise you,' he said, 'to have tea with me now. I know the place the chief means to take you to. It's an exhibition of Jim Tynan's pictures. There'll be tea of a sort, but it will be cold slop before you get there—if you ever get there at all. It's a mere chance whether O'Hara turns up this afternoon.'

His forebodings in this respect were ill-founded. O'Hara arrived while Sir Gerald was finishing his first cup of tea.

'Sorry to have kept you waiting,' he said. 'But

there's no hurry. Finish your tea. What have you been doing? Reading back numbers of *The Critic*? No? Well, I dare say you were right. The poor *Critic* doesn't look like its old self a bit since Gamble covered the outside pages with his beastly advertisements.'

'I've been hearing your praises sung by your staff,' said Sir Gerald. 'You seem to be an exception to the rule about no man being a hero to his own valet.'

'Oh,' said O'Hara, 'he may praise me behind my back. I wouldn't thank you for that sort of praise I like to be flattered to my face, and abused—I suppose we must all be abused sometimes—when I'm not there. Now, Gamble bullies me frightfully. He's not content with disfiguring the poor *Critic* with advertisements of soap and candles——'

'Irish manufacture,' said Gamble apologetically.

'I don't care if they were dug out of the Hill of Tara,' said O'Hara, 'they're advertisements. But that's not the worst of it. He objected the other day to my printing the same article three weeks running.'

'I did,' said Gamble firmly. 'No subscribers in the world would stand it. Besides, there was that poem business just before. Lots of people wrote to complain.'

'The poem,' said O'Hara, 'was an unfortunate incident. I happened to be in a particularly bad temper when I read it, so I published it with rather cutting comments of my own. When I read it in

print, it struck me as rather good ; so I waited three weeks, and then printed it again, and said that its rhythm haunted me in my sleep. No one would ever have supposed that it would be recognised. I never knew before that poetry in papers was read by anyone but the author.'

Jim Tynan's pictures were exhibited in a rather gloomy room which you reach from the street by descending a dark and steeply sloping passage. About twenty people were congregated round a tea-table at one end. They all seemed to be intimate friends. The general public had not patronized the show.

'Dublin,' said O'Hara, 'is a miserable place for an artist. Poor Tynan won't take a ten-pound note out of the whole city. You see, the only people here who have money are the officials who draw good salaries for muddling the affairs of the country. Their artistic needs are satisfied with coloured photographs of Frank Dicksee's pictures, done up in black-reeded frames. This sort of thing doesn't appeal to them.'

It didn't appeal much at first to Sir Gerald. The pictures struck him as only half finished. Gradually, however, he began to feel their suggestion of reality. He paused to look at a series of sketches labelled 'Country Types.' There was 'His Reverence' in a greasy coat, fat and benevolent, with beady eyes. Then came 'The Agent,' with a suggestion of the militia about his figure, and a hunting-crop in his hand. Next him was 'The Farmer,' a slouching figure with outstretched face and deprecating eyes.

‘I sketched those in county Sligo last summer,’ said a gentle voice.

Sir Gerald turned, and saw a lanky boy in a dirty collar with an appealingly tender smile.

‘Are you Mr. Tynan the artist?’ he asked, surprised.

‘I really am,’ said the boy; and Sir Gerald forgot the figure, and the dirt of the collar, and fell to wondering at the smile and the beautiful dark blue eyes, which seemed to have eternity in them.

‘Come,’ said the artist, ‘I will show you something better worth looking at than these.’

He led the way to a picture which hung by itself near the door. In the foreground were two great dogs, Irish wolf-hounds, whose jaws dropped red. Behind there was the nude figure of a man viewed from the back. The light fell strongly on the left foot and leg, which were splashed with red. Sir Gerald realized that it was blood which dripped from the dogs’ jaws and coloured the man’s flesh. There was a dim suggestion of a human body, mangled and torn, in the background.

‘We Catholics,’ said the artist, ‘are supposed never to read our Bibles, but that is a Scriptural subject. Do you remember how it says in the Psalms, “That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs may be red through the same”?’

Sir Gerald gazed at it.

‘I don’t understand it,’ he said at last. ‘I like the Irish ones best.’

‘Ah!’ said the artist, ‘perhaps you are right. But all my work is Irish, this as well as the rest—national in sentiment, I mean.’

‘But surely your conception of that bloodthirsty verse has nothing to do with Irish feelings.’

‘I imagine,’ said the artist, ‘that we Irish have felt that way sometimes in the past. Perhaps we do still, now and then.’

Sir Gerald turned from the pictures and looked at him. The same pathetically tender smile lurked on his lips. His eyes still suggested nothing but mystical religion. O’Hara bustled up, and Tynan effaced himself quietly in the background.

‘I see you are studying Ireland,’ said the editor, ‘under the guidance of Mr. Tynan. But come, I want to get you a cup of tea and to introduce you to another distinguished Irishman, Mr. Browne—Dennis Browne, the poet. I am sure you know his name.’

‘Dennis Browne!’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I know his reputation, of course; but I thought he was English by birth and French by choice. Is he an Irishman?’

‘You had better not let him hear you doubt it,’ said O’Hara. ‘After trying to live in Paris and London, he has come to the conclusion that Dublin is the only city not wholly given over to the bourgeoisie. The divine spark, he says, still smoulders in the Celt, and he has undertaken to fan it to a flame.’

‘Dear me!’ said Sir Gerald. ‘Will the Irish people appreciate his kind of writing? I thought——’

‘Oh,’ said O’Hara, ‘I understand what you mean ; but he has dropped that kind of thing, more or less—at least, in his writings. Besides, you know, he really does belong to a fine old Irish family. They have been rebels for generations. They say his grandfather was the first man to welcome Humbert when he landed with the French in Killala in ’98.’

The famous poet stood near the tea-table surrounded by a group of admiring ladies. It was noticeable that Dennis Browne’s audience was generally composed of women. Either the coarser minds of men were unable to appreciate the subtleties of his conversation, or he did not care to put forth his powers for their benefit. Nor did all women care to listen to him. Matrons, without assigning any reason, avoided him as far as possible, and kept their daughters out of his way. On the present occasion his admirers were all spinsters of an age which enabled them to claim their independence. He received Sir Gerald very graciously.

‘I heard you were coming over to Ireland,’ he said. ‘I have a little property down in the west, near yours. I have never been there myself, but I get all the local gossip from my agent. You are quite right to come and live here. Ireland is the only country for a man with a soul. We breathe freely in a Celtic atmosphere. By the way—I am sure you have not noticed it—the one drawback to Ireland is that the people can’t cook. I don’t suppose you have eaten a decent meal since you landed.’

Sir Gerald was conscious of having thoroughly

enjoyed his dinner at the Shelbourne the night before.

‘Really,’ he said, ‘I’ve been such a short time here, I am hardly in a position to judge.’

‘You’ll find out the truth of what I tell you,’ said Browne. ‘Why, only last night my cook sent me up what she said was an omelet. I called it an outrage. I sent for her and explained my views on omelets and on her powers as a cook. She became hysterical, and complained that my language was violent. She brought in a policeman to protect her “from talk the like of which no decent girl could be expected to listen to!” I told the policeman that the omelet was one which no decent man could be expected to eat. I asked him to try it himself, and then say whether my language, or indeed any language, was not entirely justifiable.’

‘Well,’ said Sir Gerald, whose sympathies were with the cook, ‘what happened next?’

‘Nothing more happened,’ said Browne. ‘I rather think the cook giggled. Anyhow, they both left, she and the policeman, taking the outrage with them.’

The lady at the end of the table, who had been watching her opportunity, offered Sir Gerald tea and cake. Dennis Browne resumed what was apparently a lecture to his female audience.

‘It is,’ explained the lady, ‘of his new play that he is speaking.’

Apparently she wished to listen, so Sir Gerald forebore any attempt at conversation with her.

‘The greatest difficulty,’ the poet was saying, ‘with

which we have to contend in representing the Celtic heroic legends on the modern stage is the matter of costume. The ladies of the Red Branch epoch certainly never wore certain garments now considered quite indispensable. The modern actress insists upon wearing them. I fear an audience would be shocked if they discovered she appeared without them. And yet true art is necessarily realistic in these matters, and refuses to be fettered by conventional ideas of decency.'

Sir Gerald looked round the audience. The ladies exhibited signs of a certain pleasurable embarrassment, but were evidently anxious to hear the solution of the difficulty. He felt himself unwilling to share with them any further disclosures about the lingerie of either ancient heroines or modern actresses, and turned with a commonplace remark to the lady who had given him tea. She was in no mood for exchanging platitudes with a stranger when she might be drinking in theories of art from the lips of a poet. So Sir Gerald found himself hurriedly introduced to a stout man who stood outside the tea-table group. O'Hara explained to him who his new acquaintance was.

'Mr. Donovan,' he said, 'is one of our greatest Celtic scholars. He is deeply interested in the revival of the Irish language.'

'Perhaps,' said Sir Gerald, with an effort to be civil, 'you have been helping Mr. Browne with his new play.'

‘Certainly not,’ said Donovan. ‘I shall never willingly assist in the defilement of our heroic literature by the introduction into its stories of the spirit of French decadent poets of the school of Paul Verlaine.’

Sir Gerald felt he had blundered, and was casting about for a fresh subject, when Donovan began again:

‘I said I should never willingly help Mr. Browne in his work,’ he said, with a harsh laugh. ‘It has been my misfortune to very materially assist him against my will. His new play is plagiarized—deliberately and shamelessly plagiarized without acknowledgment—from one which I wrote myself in Irish, and intended to have acted by a company of Irish-speaking peasants, trained specially for the purpose.’

‘You interest me immensely,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘Can you get an audience willing to listen to a play in Irish?’

‘We can—even here in Dublin. But my hope is that in the future Irish literature and Irish plays will spread to every village where Irish is the spoken language. Our movement makes its appeal to the peasantry. The educated classes are beyond hope. We are building up a new Ireland from the cabins of Connaught and the children of the National Schools.’

Sir Gerald caught a note of genuine enthusiasm in the voice of the man, now that he had passed away from his grievance against Dennis Browne.

‘But tell me,’ he said—‘I am not asking in any critical spirit—what is the use of reviving a language

which, in the natural course of events, would be dead in the course of the next ten years?’

O’Hara laughed, and it was he who answered: ‘Mr. Donovan hopes to make it more and more difficult for Englishmen to live in our country. Last summer I was down in a little town in the west where the names of the streets are posted up in Irish. It was a positive treat to see a touring cyclist—obviously a Sassenach—gaping up at them.’

‘Don’t take Mr. O’Hara too seriously,’ said Donovan. ‘After all, hospitality is one of our virtues. What we really feel is that we can’t allow our nationality to be merged in that of England. We mean to maintain our individuality amongst nations. But how can a nation exist without its language? If we adopt the speech of our conquerors, we shall adopt along with it their thought and their ideals.’

‘But,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘isn’t it almost too late now to revive the language?’

‘Almost, yes, but not quite. After the passing of another generation it would have been hopeless. Now we have just a chance, and everything ought to be sacrificed to taking advantage of it. I’m no politician, and, as far as religion goes, I am only a very lukewarm Protestant. If I could, I would smother every political and religious controversy until the people who take part in them are able to say what they want to say in their own proper tongue.’

Sir Gerald walked back to his hotel puzzled and dissatisfied. His glimpse of the intellect of Ireland—

if, indeed, it was the intellect of Ireland to which he had been introduced—was not inspiring. Dennis Browne he disliked. The man struck him as a ‘poseur’; his writings he knew to be morbidly disgusting, and only the more dangerous because they were touched with genius. Donovan seemed to be an enthusiast spending himself in a cause foredoomed to failure.

His place at dinner that night was reserved for him next a party consisting of an elderly gentleman, a girl—apparently his daughter—and a younger man, whom they greeted by his Christian name when he joined them at table. The girl was beautifully dressed; her rings and her necklace sparkled as she moved. She held herself confidently, and threw her laughter back in return for what the man said to her, as if she knew that admiration was her simple right. The attitudes and manners of the whole three told of a conviction that life was good, and that the best part of what was pleasant in it belonged, and ought to belong, to them. They were Irish people, for they spoke of hunting during the winter in places which bore Irish names, and of race-meetings at famous Irish courses. The young man told a story of an effort made by some ‘blackguards belonging to the League’ to stop the hunting near his place. The elder man replied with a bitter scoff at a political agitator, one Michael McCarty, whom he had helped to send to a well-deserved period of hard labour in gaol. The girl laughed.

‘Do you remember,’ she said, ‘how old Lady Louisa used to speak of them as the “canaille” ? It’s just what they are.’

Sir Gerald felt that these people belonged to a different world from that of the men and women whom he had met in the afternoon. They represented the class that O’Hara had said ought to be leading the people. What folly it seemed to think such a thing possible !

He remembered, with a sensation of pleasure which surprised him, that he, too, belonged to this class—belonged to it by right of birth and wealth and station. In the future he might find himself beside this brilliant girl, might watch her smile when he spoke to her. It had been among these people, or those like them, that his father had moved. He had, perhaps, known the old man in his boyhood—had, it might be, laughed with old Lady Louisa when she flashed like the girl who quoted her. And his father had given it all up and gone out to the others, the people, the ‘canaille’—no doubt the word had been in vogue in those days. What had Lady Louisa thought or said of him ? Certainly his father had attempted to lead the people ; ineffectually, perhaps, but even his attempt made the thing seem possible. Perhaps, after all, O’Hara was not so foolish as he seemed. Voices which cry in the wilderness are heard sometimes by those whose hearts drive them out to seek for more than a man clothed in soft raiment.

### CHAPTER III

THE journey from Dublin to the western sea-coast is not one to move the lover of picturesque scenery to enthusiasm. The carefully-tilled farms of Kildare and the broad grazing-lands of Westmeath suggest comfort and moderate prosperity. Mullingar, seen from the train, seems a fourth-rate Irish town, squalid, of course, but not squalid enough to be deemed characteristic of the country. Even the Shannon at Athlone fails to be impressive. The lazy stream, broadening from the railway-bridge northwards to Lough Ree, does not help the sentimental student of history to realize the day when Ginkel's soldiers caught the Irish officers feasting, and forced their way across it. The pettily pretentious meeting-house of some Dissenting sect catches and holds the eye of him who tries to conjure up a vision of Sarsfield's troopers riding up the banks. It is indeed something to feel, as the train slows down into Athlone, that a certain boundary is passed, and that Connaught is reached. This is the land which Cromwell thought so ill of that it seemed to him indifferent whether the vanquished

Celt went to hell or Connaught. This is the land whose spirit Davis rated so highly that he wrote :

‘ The West’s asleep, the West’s asleep—  
Alas ! and well may Erin weep,  
When Connaught lies in slumber deep.’

Henceforward the country grows, if not beautiful, at least deeply interesting. The train crawls more and more slowly through Roscommon and across Mayo. The traveller can study in detail tracts of bog, patched with bright green fields or black ploughed land. Farmhouses have disappeared, and their place is taken by thatched cabins, with lean small cattle and barelegged children round their doors. The stoppages become more frequent. From every station little huddled towns are to be seen, each a shade shabbier than its sister next on the east. The spires and towers and walls of great garish churches overtop and dwarf the houses. Featureless ranges of convent buildings have seized the vantage-ground of neighbouring hills. The church has dominated these towns, but not, as sometimes in England, where a minster looks down like a venerable mother upon the streets beneath. Here the ecclesiastical buildings are obtrusive, self-assertive, new. Bedraggled houses cluster round them, less, it seems, because they love them than from a desire to share a spurious smartness. On every platform there congregate similar groups of cattle-jobbers and small farmers clad in meanly-made shop-clothes. Very rarely among them there is some older man who still wears the rough gray frieze. The

women as they pass reek of sour turf smoke. Men and women alike have still the cowed look on their faces which is their inheritance from the generations that England really ruled. The inevitable policeman who stands by to see the train arrive and leave is a kind of symbol that Ireland is still held by a garrison.

To Sir Gerald the whole journey was intensely interesting. He formulated no impressions of what he saw, but he felt that in the west far more than in Dublin he actually touched Ireland. The tones of the people's voices, the shapes of the fields and cabins, the very air he breathed, seemed possible nowhere but in Ireland. When the train at last struggled wearily into Clogher Station, he strained his head out of the carriage window, like a schoolboy coming home, for a first glimpse of the place he already felt he loved.

To his surprise, he saw that the platform was crowded. As the train drew up a band struck up 'God save Ireland,' and the people burst into a cheer. Sir Gerald observed a little group of black-coated men who stood together and peered eagerly into the windows of the passing carriages. It flashed across his mind that the towns-people had come up to welcome him home. Evidently the men who stood in front were members of some local body, of the Urban Council or the Poor Law Guardians. He was immensely touched and gratified. He had already begun to consider rapidly how he might best express his feelings, when he heard himself addressed :

‘Sir Gerald Geoghegan, I presume.’

The speaker was a tall, elderly man, unmistakably a gentleman, dressed in a well-fitting tweed suit, with tight brown gaiters round his legs.

‘Yes,’ said Sir Gerald, who was watching the crowd gather round a carriage near the end of a train.

‘So I guessed. I am Mr. Godfrey, your agent. Have you many traps? I have the carriage outside. Shall we go over to it at once, and send for the luggage afterwards?’

Mr. Godfrey seemed hurried and a little anxious.

‘But,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘ought I not to say something to these people? I hardly like to run away like this when they have come up to meet me.’

Mr. Godfrey stared at him. Then slowly the ghost of a smile flickered across his lips.

‘Good Lord!’ he said slowly.

Sir Gerald did not hear him. He was watching the crowd. A young man had mounted on a porter’s barrow, and was making a speech. Sir Gerald could not hear what he said, but he saw the crowd gathering round him. The band stopped playing and joined the people round the speaker.

Mr. Godfrey took him by the arm.

‘It’s not you they’ve come to meet, but Michael McCarty, who’s just got out of prison. Come on.’

‘Wait a moment,’ said Sir Gerald. He saw the speaker stretch out his arm and point to where he and Mr. Godfrey were standing. The crowd turned their faces towards him. Suddenly a shrill-voiced

woman shrieked out something he could not catch, and shook her fist at him. The crowd groaned loudly. Then he heard curses shouted by the men. Mr. Godfrey glanced quickly at a smart young police-officer who stood with about twenty of his men watching the crowd.

‘Come along,’ he said. ‘Let’s get out of this. There’ll only be trouble if we stay. I’ll explain anything you want to know when we get into the carriage.’

They crossed the line and passed through the gate of the station. The road was blocked by two great brakes and a dozen or more cars. The carriage stood at some distance, unable to approach the station.

Mr. Godfrey singled out the driver of one of the brakes.

‘Pull your horses out of that,’ he said. ‘What the mischief do you mean by blocking up the whole road! Do you suppose we’re going to wade through the mud to please you?’

The man looked for a moment as though he resented the order. Then he pulled at his reins and shouted to a boy who stood near him :

‘Catch the mare by the head, can’t you, Patsey? Don’t you see Mr. Godfrey and the gentleman standing there?’ And then to Mr. Godfrey, touching his hat as he spoke: ‘Your honour won’t think I was meanin’ to interfere with the carriage?’

As soon as they had got clear of the station and were driving down the street, Mr. Godfrey’s anxiety disappeared. He leant back and chuckled quietly.

‘You’ll excuse my laughing,’ he said. ‘Really the whole thing was extremely funny. Fancy your thinking——’

Sir Gerald, who failed to see any joke in the scene at the railway-station, interrupted him.

‘Who is Michael McCarty?’ he asked, ‘and why should they welcome him?’

‘Oh,’ said Mr. Godfrey, ‘of course you can’t understand yet. Michael McCarty is M.P. for this division of the county, one of John O’Neill’s lambs, and a fine specimen of the breed. He has spent the last two months in Maryborough Gaol. His sentence was three months with hard labour. I can’t imagine why he was let out too soon.’

‘What was he sentenced for?’

‘Inciting to outrage—at least, that’s what they called it. It happened just after the county was proclaimed.’

‘But were there any outrages?’ asked Sir Gerald. ‘I didn’t hear of any.’

‘No, I can’t say there were,’ said Mr. Godfrey; ‘but it wasn’t McCarty’s fault if there weren’t. He made violent speeches. You heard him yourself to-day. That’s the sort of thing they shut him up for. I expect they’ll be sorry now they let him out.’

‘I couldn’t hear what he was saying. What was it?’

‘I couldn’t, either, but I can make a pretty good guess that he was denouncing you and me—princi-

pally me, of course. I was probably represented as your evil angel.'

Sir Gerald pondered this information for awhile, and then asked :

'Who was the woman who shouted at us?'

'That was the widow Henaghan. Her's is really a funny story. I flatter myself I scored rather neatly off John O'Neill over her. Last Christmas I had to evict her from a wretched little mountainy farm away beyond the bog. She owed six years' rent, and there wasn't the remotest prospect of her ever being able to pay anything. John O'Neill took the matter up, and wrote letters to some of the English radical papers. I remember he called me "a sinister Santa Claus." He drew a harrowing picture of the widow sitting in a snowdrift trying to suckle her child from a breast shrunk with starvation. It was exceedingly pretty and effective, only there hadn't been any snow, and Mrs. Henaghan's husband is dead these eight years. As a matter of fact, her youngest child is a well-grown boy of ten or thereabouts. I replied to Mr. O'Neill, and asked him what he meant by taking away a respectable woman's character in such a way.'

'Well?' said Sir Gerald.

'That's all,' said Mr. Godfrey. 'John O'Neill stopped writing letters on that subject.'

'But the woman?' asked Sir Gerald.

'Oh, the woman! I would have been glad enough to help her a bit, but she wouldn't take money from me. She insisted on making rows, and has spent

most of her time in prison since for breaches of the peace.'

The town of Clogher consists mainly of one long street, which runs straight to the gates of Sir Gerald's demesne. At one end stands the Roman Catholic church, obtrusively raw and remarkable, even among Irish Roman Catholic churches, for the peculiar hideousness of its architecture. It is much to be desired that the authorities of Maynooth College would appoint a Professor of Ecclesiastical Art. We might then hope to hear some Archbishop launch an excommunication against the architects who design these buildings. It cannot but be subversive of the faith and morals of a people to be obliged every day to look at edifices of which even an English churchwarden, bent on restoration, would be ashamed. At the other end of the street, on a patch of ground cut out of the demesne, stands the fane of the Church of Ireland. It has turned its back deliberately, even ostentatiously, on the town. Within the locked gates that lead to it, the gravel walk is smoothly raked, and the grass on the graves trim and tidy. The edifice itself is decent, according to the conception of the old Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Compared to its newer and wealthier rival, it has the prim air of a decayed gentlewoman in the presence of some self-assertive *nouveau riche*. Two banks, a court-house, and a work-house make up the rest of Clogher's public buildings.

The demesne gates stood wide open for the home-coming of the new master. A respectful police

pensioner saluted the carriage as it passed, while his wife and daughter peered from the gate-lodge windows to catch a glimpse of Sir Gerald.

A long avenue, shaded with lime-trees, led to the house. Cattle grazed at will on the rough grass on either side of it. The house itself stood gray and stiff above a broad artificial lake. Long rows of windows promised ample room within. Two heraldic eagles which perched against the skyline at the corners of the long front witnessed to a certain appreciation of pomp in some deceased Geoghegan.

‘The place isn’t very tidy,’ said Mr. Godfrey. ‘Of course, your poor cousin didn’t mind. He rambled about all day among the bullocks, which were the only things he seemed to care for. I should think you’ll want to make some sort of lawn, and not have them grazing right up to your steps.’

‘Yes,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘we must try to improve things a bit. I suppose there are some servants in the house.’

‘Old Jameson and his wife are there. He was your uncle’s butler, and she was the cook. I dare say they’ll make you pretty comfortable. I told Mrs. Jameson some time ago to get a handy-looking country girl and break her into housemaid work. Of course, your cousin’s personal servant—his keeper, you know, for that’s what it came to—left after he died.’

‘Will you come in and lunch with me?’ asked Sir Gerald. ‘I suppose they’ll have something for us to eat.’

‘I think not, thanks. I ought to look in at the office before I go home. Besides, it would be a shame to deprive old Jameson of the pleasure of showing you over the house. He’s always boasting that he remembers your father.’

‘Really,’ said Sir Gerald eagerly. ‘I suppose hardly anyone else does now?’

‘I think not,’ said Mr. Godfrey. And then quickly, like a man who avoids an unpleasant subject: ‘When shall I see you in the office? I don’t want to bore you with business when you will naturally wish to explore your territory and get to feel at home, but there are a lot of things that want to be looked into. Your poor cousin’s infirmity left a great deal of responsibility on me, more than I care for.’

Mr. Godfrey walked back to the town. At the demesne gate he met Canon Johnston, the Rector. It would scarcely be true to say that the Canon was lurking round the gate in the hope of meeting Mr. Godfrey, but it was certainly a fortunate accident that he had stopped to consult the police pensioner about the condition of his bees. When he met Mr. Godfrey, he was undisguisedly anxious to hear what kind of man Sir Gerald was.

‘Well, Godfrey?’ he said after shaking hands.

Mr. Godfrey, who had a sense of humour, inquired for Mrs. Johnston, and then for each of her six children. The Canon pushed his way through his family, and asked point-blank:

‘Has he arrived? What do you think of him?’

‘Who?’ asked Mr. Godfrey, with an innocent smile. Then, remembering that a considerable portion of the Rector’s income and his chances of a quiet and comfortable life depended on the character of the new owner of the property, he took pity, and said: ‘He seems all right so far.’

‘He’s not’—the Canon tapped his forehead—‘like that last man, is he?’

‘Not the least, I should say,’ said Mr. Godfrey. Then he recollected Sir Gerald’s sudden eagerness at the mention of his father, and added: ‘Any way, I hope not. You never can be quite sure. They’re a queer family, you know. The last man was simply an imbecile. His father was the sort of miser one might well call a monomaniac, and this man’s father was a rebel.’

‘I hope to goodness he’s not going to take after *him*,’ said the Canon, so sincerely as to leave no doubt that in his opinion both the imbecile and the miser were to be preferred to the Young Ireland leader.

‘I think he got a dose to start with,’ said Mr. Godfrey. ‘That ought to cure him of any leanings that way. McCarty came down in the same train, and denounced him to his face before a crowd on the platform.’

‘Ah,’ said the Canon, ‘that will let him see what those fellows are like!’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Godfrey; ‘and, oh, by the way, I nearly forgot to tell you——’ He launched into the story of Sir Gerald’s mistake. The Canon proved an amused and sympathetic listener.

## CHAPTER IV

MICHAEL McCARTY was also escorted from the railway-station to the town. The band went in front, filling the first brake. They gave a jolty version of 'The Bonny Banks of Lough Lomond' as the horses trotted down the hill. In the other brake sat the emancipated member of Parliament, supported by the chairmen of the Poor Law Guardians and the Urban District Council, with as many members of their boards as could succeed in squeezing themselves in. The rest of the crowd followed in an irregular procession, some on cars and others on foot. Barefooted enthusiasts ran beside the band and excited its members to fresh exertions.

The whole cavalcade halted outside the Presbytery. Father Tom Fahy and his curates stood bareheaded on the pavement to offer their welcome. Father Fahy had been but recently appointed administrator of the parish. He came from a remote parish, and brought with him a reputation as a politician. He was known to the members of the League as 'Father Tom, the patriot, God bless him!' Mr. Godfrey spoke of him as a 'regular firebrand, the worst type of priest.' He

shook McCarty warmly by the hand, and led him into the Presbytery. A select number of the deputation of welcome followed with the curates. The whole party assembled in the dining-room and ranged themselves uncomfortably against the walls. The centre of the room was occupied by a table of hospitable size, spread with a coarse cloth. Knives, forks, and spoons of various patterns were arranged with a certain freedom from conventionality. A shining red mahogany sideboard was covered with a great array of drinkables. In the front stood six bottles, whose gold-tinselled corks proclaimed them champagne. Behind and beside them were ample decanters of port and sherry. In the background, multiplied into an apparently endless array by the sideboard's mirror, stood John Jameson's whisky in the bottles of its maker, unashamed. The walls of the room were hung with garish prints, apparently designed to foster the piety of those who shared the priest's hospitality. Over the chimney-piece was an immense frame containing small portraits of every Pope from the original Linus down to Pius IX.

'Mary,' shouted Father Fahy cheerfully, 'make haste, like a good girl, and bring in the dinner. Mr. McCarty is starving.'

'Did they give you a good breakfast before you left this morning?' asked Mr. Walsh, the chairman of the District Council.

The delicate suggestiveness of his wit drew forth a hearty laugh, and raised a crowd of imitators.

‘Was it bread and water they fed you on?’ asked one.

‘They say the prison soup has mortal little flavour,’ added a Poor Law Guardian.

‘Faith, and it’s yourself ought to be a judge of that same!’ said a curate. ‘Didn’t you taste the work-house dinner after they said you were starving the paupers?’

Mary, hot-faced but smiling, pushed her way round the table while the jest wore itself threadbare. She deposited great joints of mutton at the head and foot. Two hams and large dishes of potatoes were arranged along the sides. The food steamed invitingly. Father Fahy whetted his knife.

‘Will you eat your mutton roast or boiled, Mr. McCarty? I recommend the boiled to you. Mary knows how to do it to a turn, and I told McKeown to give us the best meat he had for to-day.’

‘Faith, and it’s yourself knows how to choose a joint, Father Fahy. I’ll engage McKeown didn’t send the equal to that down to Sir Gerald to-day.’

‘It would be queer if he did. Who’d have a right to the best if it wasn’t the priest?’

‘And the people’s representative,’ said Father Fahy, ‘the martyr to the cause. Gentlemen, what will you drink?’

The connection of thought seemed obvious to everyone. In Ireland all ‘causes’ create thirst. Even temperance reformers recognise that enthusiasm requires some liquid refreshment, and suggest tea.

The younger of the two curates fetched over the decanters and bottles.

‘I shall support the native article,’ said McCarty, laying hands on a bottle of whisky.

‘Deed, and you will not,’ said Father Fahy—‘not to-day, anyhow. Nothing less than the fizz will serve for you and me on this occasion.’

He wrestled with the wire of the cork, and at last produced a satisfactory explosion. A large green glass, of the kind out of which people once drank hock, was filled for McCarty. Father Fahy quaffed his own share without misgiving. He was no judge of wine, and had bought this particular brand on the strength of an advertisement which described it as ‘a peculiar vintage.’ Its character had been understated. It was more than ‘peculiar.’ Quite possibly it was unique. The majority of the guests stuck to the whisky.

‘After all,’ said Mr. Walsh, ‘it’s hard to beat ould Ireland in the matter of drinks.’

‘I hear,’ said Mr. James Duffy, locally known as Sheid Amoch, or Blow-out, on account of his gift for expansive oratory, ‘that Canon Johnston has put the R.M. up to opposing ould Biddy Halloran’s application for a license at the next sessions.’

‘More shame for him!’ said Walsh. ‘What does he want to be spoiling an honest woman’s chance of earning a living for, and her a widow?’

‘That’s true, too,’ said a local publican; ‘but there’s a powerful lot of public-houses in the town already.’

‘Well, and isn’t a public-house better than a shebeen?’ said Sheid Amoch. ‘I’d be in favour myself of letting a man sell drink as he likes, the same as stockings. Them licenses is nothing but a scheme for taking the money out of the country over to England.’

The joints of mutton and the hams were after awhile succeeded by large rhubarb tarts. These also steamed. Indeed, Mary moved, as she brought in the last of them, through an atmosphere calculated to swell the beads of perspiration on her forehead. Fresh bottles replaced those whose contents had disappeared. Conversation became general and loud. Father Fahy made a speech in proposing Mr. McCarty’s health. It differed from other speeches of its kind only in being plentifully adorned with witticisms based on prison-life. Mr. McCarty replied eloquently. In a peroration he expressed his willingness to proceed, if necessary, from the prison cell to the scaffold. He closed by reminding his hearers, amid shouts of applause, that ‘the West was awake.’

One of the curates had opened a fourth bottle of the ‘peculiar vintage’ while McCarty spoke, and proceeded, as he sat down, to replenish his glass. McCarty put his hand over it. The curate persisted. McCarty turned the glass upside down, a token of determination to drink no more.

‘Go on, man,’ said Father Fahy; ‘it won’t harm you. It’s not every day a man comes out of prison.’

‘I’ve got to go and see Mr. O’Neill this afternoon,’

he explained. 'I really think I'd better not have another glass.'

'Bedad, then, maybe you're right,' said Walsh. 'O'Neill's a patriot, and a good one. I'd be the last man to say a word against him. But speaking privately—and we're all friends here—if he has a fault, it's his distrust of a drop of drink.'

'I'll send you out on my car,' said Father Fahy, 'if you must go. Come with me, and we'll tell the boy to put to the mare.'

He led McCarty from the dining-room.

'Mr. McCarty,' he said, when they got outside, 'there's something I want to say to you. Things have been going on a bit since you were away. John O'Neill isn't quite as big a man as he used to be. You understand me?'

'I do not,' said McCarty.

'Well, I can't be saying too much,' said the priest; 'only, don't you sit down under his grand talk.' He lowered his voice to a whisper: 'There's people that aren't satisfied with John O'Neill.'

'Well, I'm not one of them,' said McCarty.

'I'm not saying I am, either,' said the priest. 'Only just if I was a member of Parliament, I wouldn't let myself be put upon and treated like a dog.'

'I—I don't know what you mean,' said McCarty. 'I wouldn't let myself be bullied by John O'Neill any more than another.'

The priest looked at him curiously. 'That's right,' he said. 'Stand up to him.'

John O'Neill lived about two miles from the town of Clogher. His house nestled down to the shore of one of the innumerable little inlets of the great bay. At full tide the sea washed against the wall at the bottom of the lawn. The windows, from which in summer-time the final glory of the sunset might be watched, were often crusted with sea-salt after a stormy autumn night. The house itself was an unpretentious one. Originally it had been a 'lodge,' let during the summer to tradesmen from inland towns whose families sought for health in sea-bathing. Since O'Neill had bought it, rooms had been added to one side, and then to the other, without much regard to the external appearance of the whole. Here, in the intervals of quiet which he snatched from his politics, John O'Neill lived a lonely life. As the leader of the National Parliamentary party he was cut off absolutely from the society of the few gentry who lived in the neighbourhood. Himself a gentleman and sprung from an historic Irish family, he not only did not care to cultivate, but deliberately avoided, social intimacy with most of the men who followed his leading in the House of Commons. His religion formed yet another safeguard for his solitude, for he was a Protestant. His own co-religionists hated him heartily. The Roman Catholic priesthood distrusted him even while they supported his policy.

On the afternoon when Michael McCarty set out from the priest's house to call on him, he was idling in a deep chair in his study with a French translation

of one of Gabriele d'Annunzio's novels. A pipe and a litter of tobacco-ashes lay on the table beside him. Two or three newspapers and magazines were strewed on the floor. His broad writing-table in its corner was covered with a confused mass of papers. His listless attitude suggested nothing of the boundless energy and force which had made him the unquestioned leader of a great party, the dictator of a nation's policy. His face, especially his eyes, proclaimed a strength of character, but not the kind of strength which is likely to capture the imaginative loyalty of the Celt. John O'Neill was a puzzle to his enemies and friends alike. He indulged in no sunbursts of oratory at political meetings. He spoke rarely, and then not effectively, in the House of Commons. It was suspected that he planned and engineered the 'scenes in the House' over which the English press raged impotently, but he took no active part in them. No member of the party possessed his confidence, nor was it easy to see that any great principle guided his moves upon the political chessboard. At critical times he received with equal indifference the bids which the two great English parties made for his support. It was rumoured amongst his supporters that he had once said to a Prime Minister: 'I have no objection whatever to selling my eighty votes to you for any purpose, good or bad, but I must have my price.' John O'Neill's price was an independent Parliament for Ireland, and no English Minister had as yet succeeded in persuading his party to pay it.

Michael McCarty's courage, born of the priest's champagne and the priest's advice, oozed quietly away as he entered his chief's room. O'Neill made no pretence of politeness to his follower. He neither rose from his chair nor offered to shake hands.

'So that's you, McCarty,' he said. 'Take a chair.'

McCarty dragged one a few feet from the wall it stood against and sat down.

'They've let you out of Maryborough Gaol before your time's up,' continued O'Neill. 'I dare say you're not sorry. Three months in prison now isn't so pleasant as it used to be. This new plan of giving you hard labour rather spoils the little holiday, I expect. How did you like it?'

'I was pretty well treated,' said McCarty. 'They didn't expect me to do much work.'

'How did you put in your time?' asked O'Neill. 'Did you sit in a cell and twiddle your thumbs? I suppose they didn't let you have the newspapers.'

'No,' said McCarty; 'but I got books. I tried to make the best use I could of them. You know I had little or no education, only what I got at a national school. I tried to learn a little Latin in the gaol.'

'Good Lord!' said O'Neill. 'What for?'

'I suppose you'll only laugh at me,' said McCarty, 'but I've always felt my want of education. They say knowledge is power.'

'That saying,' said O'Neill, 'is a ridiculous lie. No man is so helpless as the man who knows a lot of things.'

‘But,’ said McCarty, looking round at the crowded bookshelves, ‘you must read a good deal.’

‘I read,’ said O’Neill, ‘to amuse myself. No one, except a few silly young women, read for any other purpose. I see you looking at my books. Do you know what they are? There are a couple of shelves of political economy—great nonsense, all of it. What’s true in that science any fool can see for himself without a book, and the rest no one but a fool would read. There are a couple of dozen volumes of poetry. Every other book in the room is a novel. Some are amusing, some aren’t. I dare say your mother could tell you just as good stories if you would listen to her.’

McCarty looked at him pathetically. He had struggled hard at his Latin grammar. It was cruel now to have his ideal of knowledge and power shattered. He had a peasant’s reverence for a printed book of any kind. He could not understand how his mother’s rambling traditions could be of value as compared, for instance, to the matter in a strange tongue that lay open beside O’Neill.

‘Then, you think it’s no use my trying to educate myself,’ he said. ‘I hoped——’

‘Not the least bit in the world,’ said O’Neill. ‘Read the newspapers. Everything that’s worth reading is in them. By the way, now you’re home again, what do you mean to do with yourself? There is no use our going over to Westminster this summer, and there’ll be no autumn session. I advise you take a holiday.’

McCarty looked round him again. A pleasant fire burnt in the grate, though the May sun was shining outside. There was a soft carpet under his feet, and an atmosphere of what seemed luxury around him. His thoughts flew back to the cabin where his mother lived. He remembered that hens pecked about the earthen floor of the kitchen, that great pots of turnips, boiled for the pigs, reeked in the corners. The mouldy rooms of hotels in country towns seemed abodes of comfort to him when he was on a political tour. A holiday, he felt, was one thing to John O'Neill, another thing to him. Perhaps O'Neill understood something of what was passing in his mind, for he said :

‘Take a turn on the farm this year—a little hay-making and turf-cutting. It’ll do you all the good in the world. You’re not the man to be ashamed of the home where you were reared.’

‘I’m not ashamed,’ said McCarty; ‘I love every sod of the old place; but—but—well, I thought of getting up a few meetings, rousing up the boys in the League, and putting a little life into the agitation.’

‘Now, that is just exactly the thing you’re not to do. I want no agitation here at present. If speeches are going to burst out of you in spite of yourself, you must go a good way off, down to Kerry or Donegal or somewhere, but you mustn’t blow them off here.’

‘I’m sorry,’ said McCarty. ‘I thought—and, besides, I’ve——’

‘You haven’t surely made a speech already?’

‘Not a speech,’ said McCarty. ‘Just a few words at the railway-station. There was a deputation to meet me.’

What did you say?’

‘I don’t exactly remember. The new landlord, Sir Gerald, you know, came down in the same train——’

‘That’ll do,’ said O’Neill. ‘You denounced him, of course. That’s just the kind of idiotic thing you would do. But,’ he added more kindly, ‘I mustn’t blame you. It was my own fault. I ought to have warned you beforehand not to do it. But no more of it. I’ll give you plenty of talking to do next spring in Westminster. Just keep quiet now for a while. And look here: if you really want to read, take any of my books you like. They’re totally useless, of course, but they amused me more or less, and it’s just possible they might amuse you.’

McCarty refused the offer.

‘Well,’ said O’Neill, ‘I suppose you are wanting to get home to see your mother. Good-bye. I’m glad you came to see me at once.’

It did not seem to occur to O’Neill to offer his follower even the limited hospitality of a cup of tea, but as soon as McCarty left he went into the drawing-room to look for some. His wife was busy over some account-books when he entered. She was a pale, faded little woman with gentle eyes, the kind of woman who would have rejoiced in motherhood. Being childless, she devoted herself to charity. So real and so unpretentious were her good works that

even her husband's political opponents, men that would not willingly have admitted the good points of a dog belonging to John O'Neill, were so far charitable as to express their regrets that 'the poor little woman should be tied to a scoundrel like O'Neill.' In reality, this pity was entirely wasted, and their estimate of Mrs. O'Neill's position and character wrong. She was not 'a poor little woman,' but one of those fortunate ones who had won and kept the love and confidence of a husband. No one would have guessed by looking at her that John O'Neill, who scorned the world's judgment of his conduct, respected hers, and, even where he would not yield to her, listened carefully to what she had to say. She alone enjoyed his confidence, and, what she valued yet more, she alone ever saw that other 'soul-side' which a man shows to a woman when he loves her.

O'Neill crossed the room very quietly and kissed her.

'John,' she said, 'don't be silly. You've interrupted me.'

'What are you doing?' he said. 'Some of your charity accounts? You know, Lucy, you'll have us ruined with all you give away. Stop now, anyhow, and let's have tea. It must be five o'clock, and I'm thirsty with talking to a fool.'

'I saw you had a visitor,' she said. 'Was it that young man who has just got out of prison?'

'Yes,' said O'Neill, 'and a precious ass he's made of himself since he got loose.'

‘I wish,’ said his wife, ‘you’d try and be more—what shall I say?—more sympathetic with these people. No men living will stand being treated the way you treat them. Some day they’ll turn on you.’

‘You’re wrong there, Lucy—at least, I think you’re wrong. You don’t understand the Celt. He’s not a man to reason with or persuade. He requires a master, someone to stand over him with a whip. If I didn’t bully him, someone else would. Probably he’d lie down on his back and ask his priest to walk on him.’

‘Exactly,’ said Mrs. O’Neill; ‘but you forget that his priest has a sort of right to walk on him, and you haven’t. Take care he doesn’t find that out. But what about this particular Celt? How did he make an ass of himself?’

‘He made a speech,’ said O’Neill, ‘just the one particular kind of speech I didn’t want made here at present. Did you hear that Sir Gerald Geoghegan arrived here to-day?’

‘No,’ said his wife. ‘But go on about the speech.’

‘I’m going on,’ said O’Neill. ‘I can’t go any faster. Well, McCarty came in the same train. A lot of Poor Law Guardians, and people of that sort, went up to meet him, and the young fool went and made a speech abusing Sir Gerald to his face before he’d been ten minutes in the town.’

‘Surely you’re not really expecting to win over that young man?’

‘I mean to have a try. I shall go and call on him.’

Mrs. O'Neill was painfully conscious of the condition of social ostracism in which they lived. She suffered from it for her own sake, and yet more, perhaps, for her husband's.

'I wish you wouldn't,' she said; 'you'll only throw yourself open to a fresh snub.'

'Lucy,' he said, 'you don't know what it is for me to be the leader of a party like mine. When they talk about my band of hired gladiators, and throw it in my teeth that I'm financing an agitation with the wages of New York servant-girls, I feel as if I would do anything almost to have just one man of position and property on my side. If there was the faintest chance that the gentry of the country would ever do anything else than lick the boots of Englishmen, I'd chuck up this wretched land agitation to-morrow. But they won't. I know them. They care nothing about Ireland. They'd see her turned into an English shire to-morrow without an effort to help her, if they could only make sure of getting their beggarly rents. But this young man is different, Lucy—at least, he ought to be different.'

'Because of his father, you mean?'

'Yes,' said O'Neill; 'he must know what his father did in '48. The blood's in him—the good fighting Irish blood. It's worth trying. I might get him.'

Mrs. O'Neill sighed.

'It's a poor chance, John, and I'm afraid you'll suffer.'

'Don't be so solemn over it,' he said. 'Wake up,

and let us make plans—crafty, diabolical plans—for snaring the young man's soul. What would you say if I put on a top-hat and go to church with you next Sunday?’

‘I wish you would.’

‘Oh, I'll only go in the worst possible spirit. Last time I went, you know, Canon Johnston compared me to Judas Iscariot. You can't expect a man to go in a Christian spirit to listen to politics grafted into the New Testament.’

‘He's quite given up political sermons lately,’ said Mrs. O'Neill. ‘He has started off at the Book of Genesis. I gave up listening after the first sermon on the subject, but I know he said something about its being a mosaic of ancient fragments.’

‘That sounds pretty safe,’ said O'Neill. ‘I think I'll venture. He can hardly work me into the higher criticism of the Book of Genesis, though, indeed, if he knew I came in the hopes of seducing young Sir Gerald from the true political fold, he might see a resemblance between me and Potiphar's wife.’

## CHAPTER V

SIR GERALD found his new life very much to his liking. It seemed to him full of interests and possibilities. In the first place, he was determined to master the details of the management of his estate. Mr. Godfrey welcomed him warmly in the rent-office, and was untiring in answering questions and explaining the meaning of the various Acts of Parliament which have affected the tenure of Irish land. Sir Gerald entered on his investigation with a prejudice against his own position. He had learnt somehow to think of Irish landlords as a race of tyrants from whose clutches benevolent Governments were trying to rescue helpless tenants. He realized with a good deal of surprise that most of the enactments of Parliament dealing with Irish land were well-intentioned blunders which had resulted in a kind of deadlock. Landlords could not, and tenants would not, attempt any improvements. He was still further surprised to find that his own estate had been managed for many years with the greatest consideration for the tenants. Many of them were very poor. Large portions of the estate were divided into miserably small holdings, for

which the tenants paid rents that were little more than nominal. Even these rents were often far in arrear, but it was very seldom that anyone had been severely pressed for payment. Evictions were extremely rare, and only took place when there seemed no possibility of the tenant ever becoming solvent. Mr. Godfrey showed him a private list of charities, from which it appeared that considerable sums were paid every year for the relief of exceptional distress among the poorer tenants. Here were entered gifts of £10 to men who had lost a couple of bullocks, and to others whom illness had incapacitated for work. Here were repeated doles to widows, loans for the purchase of seed oats or potatoes, apprentice fees paid for boys, and money allowed for the outfit of girls going out to service.

‘This money,’ said Mr. Godfrey, ‘was entrusted to me by your predecessors. I hope you will give me a similar sum. Many of your people require such help from time to time, and it will hardly be possible for me to explain the merits of each particular case to you.’

Sir Gerald was pleased to see that the Church was liberally supported. A regular sum was set apart yearly for the payment of the Rector’s stipend and the maintenance of the schools and other parochial charities. It appeared, also, that £100 a year was paid over to the Roman Catholic administrator of the parish. It gratified Sir Gerald to think that the religion of the majority of his tenants received substantial help from the estate.

‘I see,’ he said, ‘that you enter this money as paid to Father Fahy for the support of parochial institutions. I hope it is wisely expended.’

Mr. Godfrey smiled.

‘I know nothing about that.’

Sir Gerald was puzzled.

‘But the parochial institutions—what are they? Reading-rooms, clothing-clubs, and that sort of thing, I suppose?’

‘I never ask questions about the money,’ said Mr. Godfrey, ‘and if I did I shouldn’t get an answer.’

‘But surely——’ said Sir Gerald.

‘If you are wise, you’ll allow that money to be paid as it has always been.’

His agent’s reticence and obvious dislike of speaking his mind irritated Sir Gerald, and roused in him a spirit of opposition.

‘Why do you attach such importance to this particular payment?’ he asked.

‘It’s worth while making it because—if you will have it—because it gives us a sort of hold over Father Fahy. It might be stopped, you know, and—well, as long as it is paid things won’t get much beyond the talking stage here. The estate will be easily managed.’

‘I see,’ said Sir Gerald slowly. ‘The money is, in fact, a bribe to the priest to keep the people quiet. It is my danegelt.’

‘I shouldn’t put it that way,’ said Mr. Godfrey. ‘I prefer to say that you liberally support the Roman

Catholic clergy, and that they are not so hostile to you as to most of the Protestant landlords. This estate came through the bad times better than any other in the county. The agitation here never reached a dangerous head. If the rest of the gentry had done as your family did, there never would have been a land agitation. The priests would have been our most valuable allies.'

'I think I understand,' said Sir Gerald, 'but I don't like it.'

'I don't see,' said Mr. Godfrey, 'why you need bother yourself about the rights and wrongs of it. It works well, and when you know this country a bit better you'll be thankful to get a hold of a thing that will work at all.'

Sir Gerald left the office profoundly dissatisfied. It had not yet become clear to him that a landlord's sole aim ought to be the successful gathering in of his rents. That Mr. Godfrey's plan worked well for that end did not seem to be a complete justification of it. Besides, there was another side to the question on which Mr. Godfrey had not touched. A bargain—he tried to put the thing nakedly to himself—between a landlord and a priest might be well enough, but there were also the people to be considered. He disliked the idea of setting himself against Mr. Godfrey's wishes and advice in a matter touching the practical management of the estate. Very much of what he had learnt about his agent's methods was so entirely in accordance with his own ideas of what was right

that it was hard to object to this particular point. He was also beginning to understand how difficult a task an Irish land agent undertakes. To be popular with the people was, he saw, a complete impossibility. To secure the landlord's interests without open warfare was hard enough. Why should he make it harder by interfering in a matter which his agent was likely to understand much better than he did? And his interests had been well looked after. His income was a good one, it even seemed to him a princely one. Could he, in common gratitude, turn round and accuse of dishonourable conduct—for that was what it amounted to—the man who served him so well?

Sir Gerald's mind was still vacillating between what seemed the reasonable course and his instinctive shrinking from the bargain, when he paid his next visit to the office. Mr. Godfrey evidently assumed that there was nothing more to be said on the subject of the grant to Father Fahy. He entered upon a discussion about some land which was in Sir Gerald's own hands. There was a question about the letting of this land for grazing purposes or stocking and working it. As he turned over some maps which lay upon his desk, Mr. Godfrey came upon a newspaper.

'Ah,' he said, 'I was nearly forgetting to show you this. It is sure to amuse you.'

Sir Gerald looked at it. It was a copy of *The Connaught News*.

'It's our local rag,' said Mr. Godfrey, 'published every week. This week it's particularly spicy. It

contains a full account of your arrival in Clogher, and a report of McCarty's speech.'

Sir Gerald glanced at the article pointed out to him. It was headed 'A Degenerate Son.' He began to read, and after the first few lines the meaning of the title dawned on him. The article opened with a brief sketch of his father's political career. A highly coloured word-picture followed of an entirely imaginary scene at the departure of his father from Ireland. 'The noble exile,' he read, 'stood at the stern of the departing ship, waving his hands and speaking words of comfort and encouragement to the weeping crowds who knelt upon the shore. It was for their sakes that Gerald Geoghegan, "the rebel," braved death and suffered imprisonment and banishment.' The article went on to describe the son of this patriot—the present Sir Gerald—returning to the home of his ancestors. Crowds meet him, but only to scorn and 'vituperate him.' The editor's feelings sometimes required the use of the longest words discoverable. 'One hand alone is stretched out to welcome him, and that the hand of the hired tool of his tyrannies.'

Sir Gerald folded the paper and rose. His face was flushed with anger and shame. He tried to speak quietly, but only succeeded in stammering out:

'May I take this home with me? I should like to read it by myself.'

Mr. Godfrey saw that the young man was really hurt by the article. He laid a hand upon his arm.

'My dear fellow,' he said, 'you must not take these

things to heart. When you have had as much of this sort of abuse as I have, it will only amuse you.'

'Why need they have dragged my father into it?'

'These fellows,' said Mr. Godfrey, 'are nothing but a pack of blackguards. What can you expect from a pig but a grunt?'

Sir Gerald walked down the street and through the gates of the demesne with the paper in his hand. When he felt himself free from observation, he unfolded and read it again. The editor drew a touching picture of McCarty returning emaciated from the prison-house of the oppressor. The enthusiasm of a great people greeted this martyr as he stepped from his third-class carriage. 'The curled and scented representative of the ancient tyranny descends from the luxurious cushions of his saloon. Which of the two is the true son, the spiritual son, of Gerald Geoghegan the rebel?'

When he reached his study, he flung himself into a chair and sobbed aloud. There is a certain power in printed words. When they are cruel or unjust, it seems as if nothing can ever be right again. After a time, no doubt, the men whom newspapers delight to discuss become callous; but at first—and this was Sir Gerald's first experience of publicity—life has few keener pleasures and few sharper pains than printed words convey.

If he had been familiar with Irish life, he might have been able to estimate the true worth of what he read. In Ireland no one ever tries to be just. Public

speakers and writers for the daily press are entirely without a sense of responsibility. Like the fool in the Book of Proverbs, they fling firebrands, not considering that there may be inflammable matter about. Their conduct is really not so bad as it seems, for men on every side have learnt to treat three-fourths of what they hear and read as merely a kind of vigorous emphasis. In a street row, when a man damns your soul frequently and freely, you do not suppose that he either contemplates or wishes for your residence in hell hereafter. In Ireland language is used in the same kind of way. The editor of *The Connaught News* had no special feeling of dislike for Sir Gerald. Very likely he rather despised McCarty. But Sir Gerald was on one side, and he was on another, in a not disagreeable tussle, so he poured forth his curses without the least idea that anyone would take them seriously. Occasionally an English Government official pounces suddenly on a fervid orator or scribe, and insists foolishly that his words bear their obvious meaning. No one is more surprised than the victim when he is sent to prison. The sense of injustice rankles in him, for he knows he did not mean what he said, and that no one except a Government official would suppose he did.

Unfortunately, Sir Gerald didn't understand Ireland any more than English politicians do. He took what he read at its face value, and suffered, accordingly, in a quite unnecessary way. 'They might have waited,' he thought, 'till they knew me.' He was conscious

of his own desire to serve his country. He had come among the people without one selfish thought. He had desired to love Ireland, to give himself for Ireland, and already he was judged and condemned on no better grounds than that he had travelled first-class and shaken hands with his agent. His irritation gradually got the better of the pain he felt.

‘After all,’ he said aloud, ‘they are what Godfrey called them—a pack of blackguards.’

He had just spread the paper out on the table to read the article again, when a visitor was announced :

‘Canon Johnston to see you, sir.’

The Canon, following hard on the servant, entered the library. The clergyman was no fool in ordinary life. He suffered under the disadvantage of being the only man in Clogher who ever read anything except a second-rate novel. The consequence of this was that he had a quite ridiculously high opinion of his own intellectual attainments. In the pulpit he boldly dogmatized on subjects he would never have dared to touch if he had lived among educated people. It really mattered very little, however, what he preached about, for no one, not even his wife, ever listened to him. Out of the pulpit he talked sense on every-day matters, and there were few of his parishioners, from Mr. Godfrey down, who did not recognise gladly that his advice made for a practical kind of righteousness.

It was his first visit to the new landlord, and his eyes, roaming in search of indications of what kind of man Sir Gerald was, fell on *The Connaught News*

spread open at the offending article. Before his formal greeting was over, he saw that Sir Gerald was disturbed and annoyed.

‘I see,’ he said, ‘you’ve been reading that scoundrel Murphy’s article about you.’

‘Yes,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘It’s a disgraceful libel. I came here——’ He hesitated.

‘Of course it’s disgraceful,’ said the Canon; ‘Murphy wouldn’t print it if it wasn’t. It’s really a credit to a man, a sort of hall-mark of respectability, to be abused in *The Connaught News*.’

‘But it’s dreadful,’ said Sir Gerald; ‘I wanted to be friends with the people and to help them.’

‘So you can, and so you will, but they will abuse you just the same. They’re bound to do it, you know. The political ball has got to be kept rolling. You are on one side, and they are on the other.’

‘But we are all Irishmen. We ought to unite for the good of our country.’

‘When you are here a little longer,’ said the Canon, ‘you will understand—excuse my speaking plainly—that that sort of thing is all moonshine. Of course we are all Irishmen in a sense. I live in Ireland, so I suppose I’m Irish; but what is Ireland, after all, but a geographical expression? There is an Ireland in just the same way that there is a Yorkshire, but no more.’

‘I don’t agree with you in the least,’ said Sir Gerald.

‘Ah, I dare say not; but after a while you will. You

don't suppose, now, that Murphy cares a pin about Ireland, or abuses you because he thinks you are a foreigner. Not a bit of it. Patriotism is all talk. The real matter is quite different. If you declared yourself a Nationalist or a Fenian to-morrow, it wouldn't make a bit of difference.'

'I don't understand,' said Sir Gerald. 'What are Irish politics about if they are not a struggle for nationality?'

The Canon laughed.

'They are about the same thing as politics everywhere else, I suppose. There is a struggle between those who have got something and want to keep it, and those who haven't got something but want to get it. In Ireland the only thing to have or get is land. You happen to have it; they want to get it. That is the beginning and end of Irish politics. Everything else is high-falutin talk thrown in for the sake of decency.'

'I can't believe that,' said Sir Gerald. 'The whole thing would be impossibly degrading.'

'I suppose,' said the Canon after a pause, 'that it is, as you say, degrading; but, you see, we can't help ourselves. You and I are on one side; I put in myself because the interests of Protestantism are bound up with those of the landlords. We are born on one side, put there by the Almighty, and we've got to fight our corner and keep our end up as long as we can. They fight their corner, and I shouldn't blame them if they only fought fair, but they don't.'

He laid his hand upon *The Connaught News* to illustrate his point.

Sir Gerald hesitated. Certainly the editor was not fighting fair, and it did seem as if his utterly unprovoked attack had arisen out of some understanding of the situation similar to Canon Johnston's. At last he said: 'But surely in these matters there is some right and wrong?'

'Of course there is,' said the Canon. 'Our side is right and theirs is wrong. They want to take your property, and they are gradually getting it. There are two commandments in the decalogue which apply—the tenth and the eighth. I don't say anything about either the ninth or the sixth, though they don't hesitate to break them both when it suits them.'

The Canon's philosophy was amazingly simple, and the man himself was evidently quite sincere in his belief in it. Moreover, there was something in its straightforward acceptance of battle as inevitable that appealed to Sir Gerald. As his feelings about the article grew cooler, there arose in him a great desire to hit back at the man or the party that had stabbed him.

## CHAPTER VI

ANGER with most people is like a scratch on a healthy body: it stings for a little while, but if there is nothing to rub it and keep up the irritation, it rapidly heals. Sir Gerald was surprised to find how soon the article in *The Connaught News* ceased to trouble him. Not only did he find it quite impossible to nurse his desire of being revenged for the insult: he even caught himself occasionally sentimentalizing somewhat in his old fashion about Kathaleen ny-Houlahan and the glories and wrongs of Ireland. His first actual touch on Irish political life had a certain effect on his dreamings. Before he came to Ireland he had been accustomed to think of himself as one of the people, identified with their hopes, a willing soldier in the battle they were fighting. Now he liked rather to look back into the past, or forward to a remote future. He shrank from bringing his sentimental patriotism into any relation with what was going on around him. There was nothing to force him to take any active part in local affairs or in the wider politics of the nation. Everyone around him assumed, as Canon Johnston did, that the part he had to play was settled

for him by his position. An Irish landlord is like a general in a strongly entrenched position. So far as public life is concerned, he is confined to a policy of defensive inactivity. It is impossible for him to take part in local administration, and only a few are in a position to make their influence felt in the counsels of the Government. After a while, too, Sir Gerald realized that there was very little for him to do in the management of his estate. The details which Mr. Godfrey submitted to his consideration did not interest him. He came by degrees to a comfortable decision to leave the whole matter in his agent's hands.

Yet his life during the first few weeks at Clogher was far from dull. Mrs. Jameson, the butler's wife, was anxious to assume the position of housekeeper in a great establishment. She impressed upon Sir Gerald the necessity of engaging a proper staff of servants. There was no reason at all why she should not be gratified. Sir Gerald appreciated the orderly regularity of his household under her management. He rapidly acquired a taste for a certain ceremonial stateliness in his surroundings. It pleased him to sit down to dinner with snowy linen and shining silver and glass before him. When a footman was found to join Jameson in attending him, there seemed to be a pleasant dignity added to life. He had understood comfort before he came to Ireland, for his father had left him well off. He now came to appreciate the ritual of smoothly ordered service which goes to make

up the dignity of a rich man's life. Jameson, too, had suggestions to make. There were wines which should be bought, furniture which required renewing. He deferentially pointed out certain deficiencies in Sir Gerald's wardrobe. Out of doors things were much the same. The coachman had during his late master's time been obliged to confine his energies to the care of two elderly horses and a rather dilapidated landau. Sir Gerald was not inclined to provide himself at once with a large stud, but it seemed reasonable to purchase a smart dogcart and to look out for a good cob. The help of a groom was accepted by the coachman as an instalment of the large stable establishment he hoped to rule in future. The gardener, who made no secret of his belief that a Lady Geoghegan with a taste for flowers might be expected, required certain additions to his staff and improvements in his hothouses. The gamekeeper did his best to awaken sporting instincts in his new master. There are few pleasanter things than spending and planning to spend considerable sums of money when there is no fear whatever of overdrawing a banking account. These tasks are robbed of any possible irksomeness when a number of intelligent and deferential men and women suggest various obviously advantageous schemes of outlay.

Another interest in Sir Gerald's life was furnished by the visits of those of the inhabitants of Clogher whose social position entitled them to call upon him. The doctor, an elderly gentleman with a smart pair of horses, spent his time with Sir Gerald in explaining

the iniquities of the Irish dispensary system. The manager of the Bank of Ireland, after feeling his way round several topics, finally rode through his visit on his own hobby, which was gardening. A militia Colonel, who owned a small property in the neighbourhood, was evidently anxious that Sir Gerald should promote sociability by giving garden-parties. Most of the great land-owners of the neighbourhood were absentees, but Lord Clonfert, who had resided all his life on his estate, was among the first to call at Clogher House.

This nobleman had inherited while still a young man a hopelessly mortgaged and almost bankrupt estate [from his father, a famous rake, who had married in his old age a very pretty peasant girl, the daughter of one of his own tenants. He had insisted on her becoming a Protestant and spending her days in the drawing-room. It may have been the coldness of her new faith, the want of freedom, or, as was unkindly suggested, the unaccustomed confinement of shoes and stockings, which ruined the health of this Lady Clonfert. She died young, leaving her husband with a little boy, for whom he did nothing but provide too much pocket-money at Eton, and, his affairs at that time having reached a climax, an insufficient allowance at Oxford. Shortly after coming of age, this Lord Clonfert performed the one definite action of his life: he married the only daughter of a wealthy London stockbroker. The lady brought not only money, but brains, and a strong sense of duty to the

dilapidated Clonfert estate. Her money cleared Lord Clonfert from all embarrassment, and left him free to breed cattle in an inefficient way and grumble quietly at the way Ireland was governed. Her brains and capacity in practical matters secured him comfort and amusement. It did not annoy him in the least that she should take the management of his affairs into her hands, or that she should regard him as little better than a fool. Her sense of duty threatened, as years went on, to become the most serious trouble of his life. At first it had confined her energies almost entirely to the bringing forth and rearing of two sons and a daughter. Since the boys had both obtained their commissions in the army, and her daughter had left the schoolroom and shaken herself more or less free of her mother's control, Lady Clonfert's sense of duty led her to undertake the improvement of her neighbours. Her 'own clergyman'—it was thus that she always spoke of old Mr. Conerney—was the first to suffer. But the Church of Ireland in the West offers only a limited scope for an energetic woman, and she soon turned her attention to the private lives of her husband's tenants. It was at this point that she began to interfere with Lord Clonfert's happiness. He detested improvements of all kinds. He had the strongest sympathy with the people who wanted to be let alone, and he particularly disliked being made to write letters and act on committees.

He was too wise a man to openly oppose, or even publicly grumble at, his wife's plans. He found vent

for his feelings in copious abuse of the Congested Districts Board. The excellent gentlemen who compose this Board devise schemes for improving the breeds of horses, cows, pigs, and hens, in the West of Ireland. They try to persuade the peasants to grow potatoes on an improved system, and to catch fish in larger numbers. They sometimes buy estates and build remarkably ugly houses on the tops of shelterless hills for the tenants to live in. All these things were sins in the eyes of Lord Clonfert. His detestation of the Board gradually became the strongest feeling in his life. On one occasion he had publicly shaken hands with and commended a particularly disreputable local politician called Kerrigan. This man had made a speech in which he described the agents of the Congested Districts Board as a 'lot of spalpeens who'd never rest continted till every blessed cock in the country laid an egg before his breakfast in the morning.' It was this which had warmed old Lord Clonfert's heart to the man.

His visit to Sir Gerald marked the beginning of a friendship between them. Sir Gerald liked him from the first. He told stories about the Geoghegan family in bygone days—even about Sir Gerald's father. The political career of the latter did not seem to interest him. His recollections of 'the rebel' were concerned with shooting-parties and fishing expeditions.

'Your father,' said Lord Clonfert, 'was the best man to throw a fly I ever met. He had a way of

knowing where a fish would rise—a regular instinct. You'd think he knew how the trout felt about flies. He was nothing of a shot, though. Many's the bird I've seen him miss. I always said that if his politics ever led to fighting—as they did in the end, you know—there would be no lives lost in the British Army through his bullets. They say the English soldiers can't shoot worth a hang, but I'd back the worst of them to have winged your father in the end if they started fair. There would have been an awful waste of ammunition, though.'

No feelings could be hurt with talk like this. Besides, Lord Clonfert took the warmest interest in Sir Gerald's new purchases. He admired the cob, and afterwards tasted the wine. Sir Gerald, on his side, pleased the old man. He treated him with deference, and listened without being bored to stories of the Congested Districts Board's iniquities. Before he left, the old gentleman gave Sir Gerald a warm invitation to spend a few days with him at Clonfert Castle.

Another visitor was much less hospitably treated. Sir Gerald was lounging over a cigarette and a newspaper in the library, when Jameson announced :

'Mr. O'Neill has called, sir. Shall I say you are out?'

'Of course not,' said Sir Gerald. 'You showed him into the big drawing-room, I suppose. I'll be with him in a moment.'

'I did not show him in, sir,' said Jameson, adding,

as if in self-defence: 'It's Mr. John O'Neill, the Member of Parliament.'

Now, Mr. Godfrey had suggested that O'Neill had written the article in *The Connaught News*: it seemed likely that he had, at all events, inspired the speech.

'Stop a minute. Did you tell him I was at home?' said Sir Gerald.

'No, sir; I said I'd find out.'

'I don't see that there is any good in my meeting him,' said Sir Gerald. 'It would be most unpleasant for me. You had better just say you find I am out.'

'Quite right, sir, if you will allow me to say so. I call it impudence in the fellow, coming to the door of the house at all.'

Afterwards Sir Gerald thought about this visit and the way he had treated the Irish leader. He was walking round the shores of the little lake that lay below his house. The sunset and the cooing of the wood-pigeons among the trees favoured introspective and sentimental thought.

'I wonder,' he said to himself, 'why the man came here. He must have known I could not be a friend of his.'

Then there came into his mind an old story his father had told him, of how one of his friends had cut him in the street after he first became notorious as a Nationalist. Sir Gerald remembered his boyish indignation against this almost incredible bigotry. He had not been able to understand then how anyone who was an Irishman could be anything else than a

Nationalist. Now he appeared to have learnt, not only devotion to the English Government, but contempt and hatred for those who resisted it.

‘I wonder if he thought I was a Nationalist, too,’ he said.

He confessed that O'Neill might have thought so—might have expected the son of Gerald Geoghegan ‘the rebel’ to be on the side of nationality. He tried to persuade himself that he was, arguing that he did not object to O'Neill's principles, but only to his methods. It was no use. The thought kept recurring that his conduct had been the same as that of his father's friend, the man whom he had always regarded as the very type of stupid bigotry. It was almost as if he had shut the door of the house in his own father's face. He grew uneasy. Yet it was hard to see how else he could have acted. He fell back upon Canon Johnston's philosophy. The whole thing was inevitable, since he was what he was. It might have been different if he had not been a great landlord and bound to stand by his class. Yet he wished sincerely that the decision had not been forced on him so soon, that John O'Neill had not called.

## CHAPTER VII

SIR GERALD found his visit to Clonfert Castle most agreeable. He was charmed at first with Lady Clonfert. She possessed the faculty, which marks the true *grande dame*, of making every guest who shook hands with her feel that he or she was peculiarly, even confidentially, welcome to her house. During dinner on the evening of his arrival, she gave Sir Gerald an account of the various industries she had started among her husband's tenants. She allowed him to gather the impression that his approval was a vital necessity to her. It was with a pleasant sense of his own importance that Sir Gerald realized that his wearing Clonfert tweed and having his handkerchiefs embroidered by Clonfert 'spriggers' would secure the success of his hostess's undertakings.

Miss Carew rescued him from committing his entire wardrobe to her mother's care.

'If you do get a suit of our tweed,' she said, 'I advise you at least to avoid the local tailor. Have you seen father's latest suit? I assure you two people could fit quite comfortably into the coat.'

'I find it very difficult,' said Lady Clonfert, 'to get

good tailors to buy my tweeds. Of course, I know you must take what your man offers you in the way of material. You can't go to a fashionable tailor with a roll of stuff under your arm and ask him to cut it for you. But, really, the local tailor is not so bad as Hester makes out. You must take into consideration Clonfert's figure. It can't be easy to make clothes look well on a man with shoulders like——'

'Like a lamp-post,' said her husband, with a gentle smile.

'Patronize the sprigging, anyhow,' said Miss Carew. 'Some of mother's girls do initials on handkerchiefs wonderfully well.'

'So they do,' said Lord Clonfert. 'But look here, Sir Gerald. Did you ever hear of such a thing? No sooner has my wife had the girls taught embroidery, and put them in the way of earning a few shillings, than that meddling Congested Board sends a woman down to the national school to teach them lace-making.'

'It does seem rather absurd,' said Sir Gerald, 'to try and start two industries in the same place. I suppose, Lady Clonfert, that your work does a great deal of good—makes the people more comfortable, I mean?'

Lord Clonfert and his daughter exchanged a smile. There was evidently an understanding between them about the amount of comfort produced by Lady Clonfert's energy.

'Of course,' said the lady herself. 'I hope by degrees to teach them habits of industry and self-reliance.' She spoke as if she were quoting some-

thing. 'At present they are deplorably indolent ; and as for the state of the houses, they are simply shocking. I wish I could import some Englishwomen for a few months just to show them what cleanness means.'

'Mother would like to turn us all into Englishwomen,' said Hester. 'I hope, Sir Gerald, that you are Irish enough to like a little dirt.'

'Do you know,' went on Lady Clonfert without noticing the interruption, 'I was trying to explain to a woman the other day that she ought *sometimes* to wash her children's faces, and what do you think she said to me? "Saving your ladyship's presence, so long as they are clean enough to be healthy and dirty enough to be happy, and don't be cutting and burning themselves, I'll rest content."'

'I'm afraid I rather sympathize with her,' said Sir Gerald.

'Well done!' laughed Hester. 'We'll make an Irishman of you yet. Fancy the folly of spending the day in trying to keep children's faces clean !'

'I have had three children,' said Lady Clonfert, 'and I used to have their faces regularly scrubbed.'

'Indeed you did, mother ; I remember it.'

'Scrubbed,' repeated Lady Clonfert with emphasis, 'as long as they were under my control.'

'Which is as much as to say that they have been dirty ever since,' said Hester. 'Father, tell me : is my face absolutely black, or only grimy ?'

After dinner Lord Clonfert entertained his guest

with a long tale about a pier which the Congested Districts Board had recently built in the neighbourhood with a view to encouraging sea-fishing. It appeared that the Board's engineer had only succeeded in erecting a monument to his own incapacity. The pier could not be reached from the land except by crossing a sort of salt-water morass, a journey dreaded under the most favourable circumstances by the local donkeys. From the sea it was only accessible at the top of a high tide, and not then unless the wind was from the east.

'And, you know,' said Lord Clonfert, 'that on this coast the wind is from the west nine days out of ten, and on the tenth day there is no wind at all.'

'By the way,' he went on after a pause, 'what would you like to do with yourself while you are here? I can give you a day's fishing if you like, but I fancy your own is better. Do you care for sailing? We might go out on the bay in my little boat, and take our luncheon with us. Hester would pilot us. She knows the rocks as well as any man about the place.'

Sir Gerald thought the plan sounded delightful.

'We'll go up to the drawing-room, then, and ask Hester. Unless you will take something more to drink. No? Well, I'll show the way.'

Hester Carew used to say that the bay, at the end of which Clogher stood, was too beautiful to have any attractions for the British tourist. There was some truth in her remark, for the taste of the tourist has been educated to appreciate a certain kind of natural

beauty. Bold cliffs, rugged mountains, narrow gorges, waterfalls, and well-wooded valleys come within his definition of the picturesque. Clogher Bay offers none of these. The mountains on its shores brood rather than tower above it. There is no suggestion of the fiord about its broad stretch of sunlit or mist-shadowed waters. The tides flow gray over long flat reaches of muddy sand. Hundreds of low green islands are dotted over the water, each with its bluff facing the Atlantic to the west, and grass sloping eastwards down to the verge of the sea. Among them Lord Clonfert's little boat threaded her way, with Hester steering her. Sometimes she beat up a narrow passage between two of them; sometimes she ran free along an oily tideway, or drifted smoothly over shallows where the long cords of weed brushed caressingly against her sides. Once Hester took them beneath the clay bluff and great boulders of one of the outermost fringe of islands. The broad swell lifted and swayed the boat gently. A silence fell upon them, a kind of awe. Westward stretched the great ocean, shoreless to the icy coast of Newfoundland. It seemed no hard thing to believe that beyond them, hidden in the glory of the sunset, there might lie the *Tir-na-nogue*, the land of immortality, which St. Brendan sailed to look for, and doubtless found.

The breeze was off shore, and the water rippled out to them across the great ocean swell. Hester looked up suddenly, and said, more to herself than to her father or Sir Gerald:

‘I should like to let the sheet go now, and run on into the West, sail into the sunset and the islands of the blessed.’

Sir Gerald understood her feeling sufficiently not to speak in reply. Their eyes met, and she knew that he also acknowledged the power of the great romance, the brooding enchantment which has made the Irish of all races the least practical, a failure, as the Anglo-Saxon reckons failure or success, everlastingly irresponsible to the sanest schemes for its improvement.

Once, quite suddenly, rounding a long point, they came upon an island home. A low thatched cabin stood half on the coarse grass, half on the stony beach. Behind it a man leaned on his spade in the middle of a patch of ground dug into potato ridges. Beyond him a woman, barefooted, and bent with the weight of a basket on her back, walked on the outermost verge of the bank which sloped eastwards towards the cabin, and shouted encouragement to three cows straggling homewards beneath her along the beach. Once they passed close by a crowd of girls on a rock, left bare by the low spring-tide. Some were ankle-deep among the pools, some poised on stones hidden by the seaweed. Each carried a tin pail to fill with small shellfish.

‘They are all island girls,’ said Hester. ‘Their whelks are shipped to Glasgow.’

Sir Gerald dwelt with a certain sad pleasure on the contrast between the gathering and the final marketing of the fish. The artisan’s wife, bargaining for a

‘relish’ at a barrow in some dusty city highway, seemed a whole world apart from the group of girls before his eyes, who stooped among the rocks and dabbled feet and hands in the salt water. In the evening they passed them again. This time the girls were rowing homewards. The tide flowed with them like a river, and they dipped their oars in time to the song they sang.

Once in a narrow waterway they watched two boys land on the beach opposite their home. They chased towards the sea a mingled flock of geese and ducks. The birds, pushed, as it were, from the land by the shouting boys, flew clamorously over the strait, and one by one struck the water with their breasts, splashing it right and left, and shooting along the surface with the impetus of their flight. The boys followed in their crazy boat, herding the whole flock to the door of the opposite cottage.

‘These people,’ said Sir Gerald, as they drifted slowly past, ‘must lead the best of all lives and the happiest.’

‘Some of them,’ said Lord Clonfert, ‘are your tenants, and some, I’m sorry to say, are mine. When it comes to paying their rents, they don’t describe their homes as earthly paradises.’

‘Once,’ said Hester, ‘I used to visit a girl who lived in the cottage we have just passed. She was in the workhouse infirmary. I knew she was dying. Everyone knew it except herself. It was wonderful to hear her talk about her home. She had no education, and

I don't suppose she could have analyzed her own feelings; but her whole soul was wrapped up in a desire to be back with her people and living their life among the islands.'

The fourth day of their sailing was a holiday. They found themselves among a fleet of boats making for the landing-place opposite the chapel on the mainland. Large black hookers, with queer curved bows, that reached upwards out of the water, pushed their way solemnly shorewards. Among them went little boats, each with a single sail, manned by a steersman, and perhaps a boy, with a couple of women sitting by the mast. The people shouted greetings to each other across the water. Sir Gerald asked what they were saying.

'I only know a few words of Irish,' said Hester, 'but I can translate that much for you. Listen! That man shouted, "God bless you!" and the woman there answered him, "The blessing of God and Mary on yourself!" Almost every Irish phrase of greeting and parting has God's name in it. If the sun shines, it is a fine day, "thank God!" If everything is being ruined by the rain, it is "the weather the Lord is pleased to send us." We are ashamed to talk to each other in that way. If we believe in God, we don't want anyone to find it out. Is it not an amazing piece of arrogance for anyone to start trying to convert these people?'

'Now, Hester,' said Lord Clonfert, 'don't start talking theology. I'm always afraid of my life,' he

added to Sir Gerald, with a laugh, 'that Hester will turn Roman Catholic and try to convert me.'

'Nonsense!' said Hester. 'I admire the religion which makes our people what they are, but it can't be my religion.'

'Now, why,' said Sir Gerald, 'do you say *can't*? I suppose you can turn Roman Catholic if you like. I mean religion is a matter of choice, isn't it?'

'I don't think so. I don't want to be a Roman Catholic, but even if I did I couldn't. I don't know how it is in other countries, but here you are born one thing or the other, Protestant or Roman Catholic, just as you are born a boy or a girl. You can't change. I never heard of anyone in Ireland changing his religion. Did you, father?'

'Well, no,' said Lord Clonfert—'at least, no one who had any religion to change. There are always a few "soupers," as they call them, knocking about, but I don't count them.'

'I don't think,' said Sir Gerald, 'even if I swallowed the whole Roman system, Infallibility and all, I should be any nearer being able to say, "A fine day, thank God!" to a man I met casually on the road.'

'That's curious,' said Lord Clonfert. 'I've no difficulty about that at all. I couldn't say it to you, of course, but if I see a man digging potatoes in a field, it is quite natural to me to say to him, "God bless your work!"'

'That's just one of the things about you, father, which shows that you are a true Irishman. I'm

afraid I have a lot of mother's Englishness in me. I often feel "God bless the work!" but I never can get my lips round saying it.'

During these days of sailing on the bay the three had many such conversations. The close companionship of the little boat and the strangeness of their surroundings dissolved the conventional restraints which make intimate talk impossible except for old friends. Sometimes they had slow wandering discussions lasting for an hour or more. Sometimes they sat in silence, the men smoking while Hester steered. Sir Gerald found a steadily increasing pleasure in watching her. He had found a way of stretching himself on the floor boards of the boat, leaning against the mast. He could look steadily at Hester without her knowing that he watched her. He became familiar with the grip of her hand on the tiller, and the sway of her body as she loosened or pulled in the sheet. Generally she seemed unconscious of his gaze. When by chance she caught his eyes fixed on her, she spoke to him, as if she counted his gaze a reproach for her silence.

Once they talked about Lady Clonfert's approaching exhibition of industries. It was to put an end to the sailing, even if the weather held good. They had successfully avoided the last of the preliminary committee meetings, and Sir Gerald boasted that he had bought their freedom at the price of his name as a patron and the promise of a prize for knitted socks.

‘I wish you would offer ten more prizes,’ said Lord Clonfert, ‘and let us escape the thing itself.’

‘You’re very ungrateful, father,’ said Hester. ‘Think of the time you’d be having to-day, taking notes of all the valuable suggestions the members of the committee made.’

‘I know,’ said Lord Clonfert—‘I know very well what I’ve escaped. Last time I tried to make the dear people see that there was something a little comic in offering a prize for the best hand-sewn night-dress, and then confining the competition to farmers of less than £30 valuation. Nobody saw my point, and when I explained that very few farmers of any valuation could sew even a button on their trousers, much less make a night-dress, your mother frowned at me, and that wretched Mr. Ford from Kilsallagh said that it would be ridiculous to offer a prize for sewing buttons on trousers. I gave it up after that, seeing that things were getting a little mixed.’

‘Doesn’t it do any good?’ asked Sir Gerald.

‘I don’t know,’ said Lord Clonfert. ‘Personally, I regard all these efforts to improve people as most insulting to them and very boring to us. I don’t see why they should not take the initiative for a change, and try to improve us. It would be a great deal more amusing. You and I, Sir Gerald, might find ourselves competing for a prize offered to the gentleman who gave least trouble to his domestic servants. I suppose that is the sort of prize they would offer.’

‘What do you say, Miss Carew? Are you in sympathy with the exhibition?’

‘I’ve had rather unfortunate experiences of committee meetings, too,’ said Hester. ‘At the last one there was an animated discussion about luncheon. There are to be two tents—one for the gentry, in which you are charged three shillings; the other for the common people, in which you are fed for one shilling. The three-shilling lunchers are to have the privilege of ordering champagne or claret if they like. The question arose as to whether the others were to be allowed a bottle of porter, or were to be strictly confined to lemonade.’

‘As well as I recollect,’ said Lord Clonfert, ‘I voted for the porter. Your mother was on the side of the lemonade.’

‘Yes,’ said Hester. ‘But it was not so much the question itself, as the way it was discussed, that irritated me.’

‘It irritated more than you, Hester. Did you notice the way Mrs. Courtenay looked at me when I said that no one could get riotously drunk on a bottle of porter? My way of discussing the question irritated her.’

‘I don’t see,’ said Hester, ‘why it should be taken for granted that every man who can’t pay three shillings for his luncheon is bound to get drunk if he has the chance.’

‘He generally does, though,’ said Lord Clonfert. ‘I’m not blaming him; I’m only stating a fact.’

‘Nonsense, father! That’s just what that horrid Mrs. Courtenay seemed to think. She would have carried her point, too, only that Miss Hill reminded the committee that, as they were running the show to make themselves popular, there was no use being offensive about drinks.’

‘Very sensible of Miss Hill,’ said Lord Clonfert. ‘It’s much better to be cheered by a drunken man than scowled at by a sober one.’

‘It was utterly degrading,’ said Hester, her face flaming. ‘If these grand ladies——’

‘I wish Mrs. Courtenay and Miss Hill could hear you,’ said her father. ‘How pleased they would be at being called “grand ladies”!’

‘Well, they think themselves grand enough, anyhow. If they are giving prizes and patronizing the farmers’ wives simply to make themselves popular, the whole thing is a fraud, just as John O’Neill said it was.’

‘What did John O’Neill say about it?’ asked Sir Gerald, with interest.

‘I don’t remember his exact words, but he advised the people not to allow themselves to be made into toys for great ladies to play with when they come over from London for a holiday. I think he was perfectly right.’

Sir Gerald suddenly realized that Hester was beautiful. He had watched her face in repose, and found it full of romantic possibilities. He had seen flashes of intelligence light it up, and shadows of

puzzled thought pass over it. Now he saw it on fire with indignation. There was a flush of crimson on her cheek, and a gleam—almost fierce—in her eyes. He wished to keep to the subject which made her angry and beautiful.

‘Do you know,’ he said, ‘that John O’Neill called and left his card on me just before I came here?’

‘He’s got the cheek of the Old Gentleman himself,’ said Lord Clonfert.

‘I suppose I shall have to return his call.’

‘God bless my soul! Don’t do that,’ said Lord Clonfert, startled out of his usual good-humour; ‘you can’t do that. There isn’t a gentleman in the county but would cut you if you were a friend of John O’Neill’s. Of course you don’t understand, but I can remember when they were shooting us like partridges. Poor old Thompson, the Sub-sheriff, was shot dead, and lots more. I was shot at myself. You can’t go and call on a man who would pot you from behind a hedge.’

‘That’s all years and years ago,’ said Hester. ‘Nobody is shot at now.’

‘No thanks to John O’Neill if they’re not,’ said Lord Clonfert. ‘He’s one of the same infernal gang. Don’t talk nonsense, Hester, on serious subjects. You were only a child in those days. Ask your mother about it. I never went out after dark but she spent her time on her knees praying for my life till I came home again. I remember when a man daren’t sit in a room with a lighted lamp and an open window.’

Sir Gerald was amazed. This was a wholly new light on Irish politics. Afterwards, when he thought over Lord Clonfert's words, the recollection of his own indignation at the newspaper article helped him to understand the feelings of the men who had lived through the 'bad times' of the land agitation. He admitted that they could scarcely feel otherwise than they did. Yet he was conscious of a certain want of nobility in Lord Clonfert's attitude. A gospel of mere hatred does not appeal to the young and imaginative mind, and it seemed that for Lord Clonfert politics were summed up in one simple hatred. He wearied himself with thinking round and round the subject. The more he thought, the more impossible it seemed to find any clear vantage-ground on which to stand, from which to press forward to useful action. Once more he was forced back upon the fatalism of his last decision. He was a gentleman and the representative of a class. He had no possible duty except to fight as well as he could the battle of his side, or else to let things slip along as they might without his interference.

Yet his old dream of loving Ireland lingered still at the back of his resolution. Kathaleen ny-Houlahan haunted him, the beautiful figure of Ireland; but now he saw her face, and it was the face of Hester Carew.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE day of the exhibition was fortunately fine, and the lawn in front of Clonfert Castle looked gay, dotted over with white tents arranged for the accommodation of the exhibits. At quite an early hour the scene became animated. Members of the committee, male and female, adorned themselves with large green badges, and fussed with increasing velocity from tent to tent. Two very great ladies from a remote corner of the county arrived by an early train, and drove out laden with bales of tweed and stockings made by their husbands' tenants. Their costumes were devised specially for the occasion, and were intended to advertise the suitability of home-made materials for ladies' wear. The inferior members of the local committee received them with joyful deference, admiring, while they wondered at, the daring yellow of one skirt or the luxuriant flounces of crochet which adorned the other. Sharp-faced young women, representing convents which traded in lace and linen, struggled with each other, and even irreverently jostled the great ladies in the effort to secure the best positions for exhibiting their goods. Amateur

gardeners unpacked sodden-looking hampers of flowers and vegetables in inconvenient places. They inquired, at first hopefully, afterwards with a certain querulousness, for water to fill their exhibition glasses. After a time they gathered in little groups and anathematized the committee's arrangements. Bewildered country-women, whose fowls had escaped from control, pursued them with cries round, and even through, the tents. Small girls, bringing loaves of home-baked bread and rolls of butter, clamoured persistently to have them stalled in quite impossible places.

Amid the general confusion, Lady Clonfert displayed the powers of organization and prompt action which have made her race commercially great. She had arrayed herself in a dress of the purple flannel which Mayo country-women use for petticoats. The colour rendered her a conspicuous mark for everyone with a grievance or a difficulty. Agitated members of the committee appealed to her at every corner. She soothed them into comparative sanity without showing a sign of irritation. Exhibitors, whom anger rendered uncivil, attributed their failure to find a place for their goods to her personal incapacity. She pointed out to them that their difficulties rose from want of attention to the printed directions in their hands, and succeeded in leaving them smiling and content. She gave over to Hester the task of pacifying a Countess whom an injudicious member of the committee had forbidden to hang a rainbow of shoot-

ing stockings round the tent devoted to the shilling lunchers.

Lord Clonfert strolled through the crowd in perfect good-humour. He congratulated a country-woman on the activity of her chickens in a way which brought smiles and blessings to her lips, and something like tears of irritated vexation to the eyes of a young woman who was trying to protect some ecclesiastical lace from their flutterings. He assured an amateur gardener that his carnations were absolutely certain to take a prize, and apologized amiably when he discovered that this particular man was only exhibiting vegetables. The people who asked him where they were to bestow their goods, he directed with reassuring promptitude to the tent which happened at the moment to be furthest off. In this way he avoided the worry of trying to find out the right place, and generally succeeded in escaping the subsequent reproaches of his victims.

Sir Gerald, who knew nothing of the arrangements of the show, and was a stranger to almost everyone there, enjoyed himself quietly; smoking a series of cigars and watching Hester deal with the angry Countess. Early in the afternoon he was captured by Lady Clonfert, and told to secure lunch for a very great man who had just arrived with his wife. The Right Honourable George Chesney was a Cabinet Minister, and was popularly supposed to govern Ireland. In reality, his position was like that of a football in a tightly-packed scrimmage. Vigorous

forwards impelled him, more by kicking than persuasion, in opposite directions. The equilibrium which might have resulted was continually being interfered with by adroit players, who shoved him sideways or heeled him out backwards. He was occasionally rushed into peculiarly uncomfortable positions when someone succeeded in what is technically known among football-players as 'screwing the scrimmage.' He was never without the consciousness that alert half-backs were lurking in Westminster, eager for a chance of picking him up and whisking him away. It speaks for the toughness of the leather in which he was encased that the Right Honourable Mr. Chesney not only enjoyed life, but continued fully distended with that wind which is the prime necessity of politicians who make many speeches.

Lady Clonfert had captured him for her show by means of a skilfully planted series of telegrams. He had been enjoying an entirely unofficial motor tour through Connemara, when she got knowledge of his whereabouts. He succumbed with a comparatively good grace to the fourth message which he found awaiting him at an hotel, and arrived at Clonfert Castle primed with a speech. His wife, who, fortunately, was wealthy, did her duty by the exhibits. She supplied her husband with an immense number of stockings, and secured for herself several enormous flounces of crochet and a quantity of lace, which some pious nuns had designed for a Bishop's vestments. The great man himself asked amiably intelligent

questions on a variety of industrial topics, and evaded the different attempts to induce him to promise Government grants for starting factories.

Sir Gerald conducted him through the show to the luncheon tent. His duty as cicerone was easier than he expected. It was his first experience of intercourse with a prominent politician, and he was surprised to find himself chatting naturally to a man whose words and actions formed the raw material for the leading articles of the daily papers. Mr. Chesney possessed an apparently inexhaustible fund of information on every subject except politics. After luncheon Lady Clonfert interrupted him in the middle of a dissertation on the probable future of a newly-invented kind of golf-ball. He braced himself for an effort as his hostess led him to a tent placarded 'Café Chantant.'

The function of this pavilion was entirely unconnected with coffee, or, indeed, with any other beverage, but the second half of its title was justified by a series of short concerts held in it during the afternoon and evening. A large audience had collected in expectation of a speech from Mr. Chesney. The two very great ladies occupied chairs in the front. Round and behind them were grouped minor dames with such of their husbands and sons as they had succeeded in dragging with them to the show. Behind these, on forms, closely packed, were the local clergy with their wives, doctors, solicitors, and some of the leading shopkeepers from Clogher. At

the back of all were a few farmers. Here and there were newspaper reporters. Mr. Godfrey was acting as master of the ceremonies. He made an effort to plant Sir Gerald on a still vacant chair in the front row, but the latter clung to a position in a corner near the entrance in spite of him, and was rewarded for his humility by finding himself standing next to Desmond O'Hara. They had no time for more than a mutual recognition before Lord Clonfert mounted the platform and introduced the Right Honourable orator to the audience.

A tent is a bad place for enthusiastic applause. The men stamped their feet quite noiselessly on the damp grass, and the clapping of gloved hands died away in a faint flutter against the canvas. Under the circumstances, it was nice of Mr. Chesney to express himself pleased with the warmth of his reception. He assured his audience, with flattering earnestness, that he felt himself to be standing in the midst of those who were really working for the good of Ireland. What the country wanted was less politics and more industry. It was his misfortune to be engaged in politics; it was the privilege of his audience to be furthering the cause of industry.

At this point Mr. Godfrey made a vigorous but only partially successful effort to start a cheer. Mr. Chesney bowed in acknowledgment of the intention, and proceeded.

The eminence of English statesmen—perhaps of

statesmen in all popularly - governed countries — appears to depend very much on their capacity for giving utterance to platitudes in such a way as to persuade their listeners that they are hearing new and profound truths. Mr. Chesney was a master of this useful art. He was able also to add puerilities to his platitudes with an air of serious wisdom which carried his audience with him. In Lady Clonfert's tent he was at his very best. No one recognised his general panegyric of industry as a paraphrase of Dr. Watts's famous verses about the little busy bee. Descending to the particular case of Ireland, he dwelt at considerable length on the advantages which would accrue to the country if the people would take to making useful articles for which a market could be found in England. Great Britain, he assured his audience, was a generous pay-mistress to those who ministered to her wants.

Sir Gerald recollected the girls who picked whelks. They got, he had been told, as much as eightpence a stone for what they collected. When he picked up the thread of Mr. Chesney's discourse again, he found himself listening to an eloquent prophecy of a wave of prosperity for Ireland when the people learned to make toy boats and children's dolls. An immense amount of money, it appeared, went every year to Germany and Switzerland for these necessities of modern life. Why should not all this money come to Ireland? Mr. Chesney did not know, nor did his audience. The idea of making dolls was new to

them ; it was probably quite new also to Mr. Chesney. If it were, he made the most of the inspiration. He estimated the nation's annual expenditure on dolls at many thousands of pounds. He himself, for family reasons—his glance indicated Mrs. Chesney to the audience—contributed largely to this expenditure. Probably the majority of those present did so, too.

The ladies in the front rows smiled their appreciation. Mr. Godfrey inaugurated another round of applause.

Sir Gerald felt a touch on his arm, and O'Hara whispered to him :

'I've had enough of this speech. Is there any place where we can get tea ?'

Sir Gerald slipped after him from the tent.

'I suppose you didn't expect to see me down here,' said O'Hara. 'When you know me better, you'll realize that I'm like a microbe—liable to be met with anywhere. At present I am a sort of Biblical devil wandering through dry places seeking whom I may devour. Did it ever occur to you that microbes may be little devils? I dare say not. It never struck me till just this moment, but there's something in the idea. It would reconcile modern medical science with the New Testament idea of possession, and account for the herd of swine which ran violently into the sea. You might think the thing out, and, when you've nothing particular to do, write a letter about it to *The Critic*.' He paused for a moment, as

if to adjust his thoughts, and then went on: 'Did you ever hear such drivel as Chesney was talking in that tent? Here's a nation gripped with the birth-pangs of her own regeneration, in the pains of bringing forth herself—now don't interrupt me by saying that's a bull: I know it's a bull. No great truth can be uttered except in the form of a bull. That is why bulls are peculiarly Irish. It is our function to discover and utter great truths for the salvation of a sordid and commercial Empire. But what was I saying when you looked as if you were going to interrupt me? Oh yes! here we are—trying to give birth to our own nationality, and this man, who ought to be our midwife, talks to us about making dolls.'

'Here is the place,' said Sir Gerald, laughing, 'and here is Miss Carew. I must introduce you. She's a great admirer of your paper.'

The introduction was a real pleasure to Hester. She read and appreciated the articles which appeared in *The Critic* on the ancient history and poetry of Ireland. Once she had ventured to send some verses of her own to the editor, which had been duly printed. O'Hara recollected that she was both a subscriber and a contributor.

'Why don't you send me some more poetry?' he asked. 'The last was very good. Young ladies ought to write verses when they can, instead of wasting their time in making stockings.' He waved his hands comprehensively towards the tents where

the exhibits were piled. 'Poems are of more value to the nation than tweeds.'

'But, Mr. O'Hara,' said Hester, 'when you printed my poor little verses, you put in a note, signed "Ed.," saying that the verses were very good, but that I ought to be doing something useful. Even young ladies, you said, had no right to be fiddling while Rome was burning.'

'Did I say that?' said O'Hara. 'What can I have been thinking about, to be cross to a charming young lady who wrote verses? Perhaps it happened when I was recovering from the influenza last spring. I'll apologize publicly if you like in the next number. Anyhow, you must not take *The Critic* too seriously. It is an irresponsible, playful sprite, the Ariel of Irish politics.'

'The first time I met you,' said Sir Gerald, 'you told me to furnish my house from top to bottom with Irish manufactures, and now you are telling Miss Carew not to make stockings, and abusing Mr. Chesney for suggesting an Irish doll-factory.'

'If it gives you any pleasure to find me out in inconsistencies,' said O'Hara, 'you are likely to have a happy life. I'm not consistent. There's nothing which goes under the name of a virtue that I despise more thoroughly than I do consistency. Any way, I said that about the manufactures in England. I'd been breathing a commercial atmosphere for a fortnight. I'm back in Ireland now, thank God! and can say what I like about Mr. Chesney and his factories.'

Before they finished their tea, Sir Gerald persuaded O'Hara to pay him a visit at Clogher.

'I suppose I can give the public a holiday,' said O'Hara; 'I'm sure they deserve one. I'll just polish off this week's number to-night, and then there will be no more *Critics* for a fortnight.'

Sir Gerald proposed a stroll through some part of the grounds not invaded by the show. O'Hara preferred to finish his round of the tents; but Hester, with misgivings on the score of neglected duty, allowed herself to be persuaded to go. They took a path through a plantation to an open space, where the grass, fragrant with thyme, gave way reluctantly to the coarse spiked growth of the billowy sand-hills. Beyond them lay the broad, flat beach and the bay, stretching away into a mist across a belt of red light from the west. For awhile neither Hester nor Sir Gerald spoke. Both felt the solemnity of the sea and its desolation. The noise and bustle of the show grounds, the babble of talk, the inane braying of the band, seemed suddenly remote; but time was needed to adjust the mind to its new surroundings. It was Hester who spoke first.

'I'm glad Mr. O'Hara is going to stay with you. He's a true Irishman in spite of all his oddity.'

'Yes, I'm glad he's coming,' said Sir Gerald; 'but why did you say that about his being a true Irishman? Do you think I require to be converted to patriotism?'

'I think,' said Hester—and her own boldness

surprised her as she spoke—‘that you ought to be an Irishman : I mean an Irishman who loves Ireland, not like—like the others, who only care for themselves or their party.’

‘That’s what I hoped to be, but you don’t know how hard it is. There are puzzles and difficulties which meet one at every turn.’

‘It ought not to be so hard for you.’

‘But why for me ? It seems to be harder for me than for anyone else.’

It was some time before she answered him. Then she said :

‘Perhaps you will be angry with me for saying this, but it ought not to be hard for the son of Gerald Geoghegan to love Ireland.’

‘But I do love Ireland. Only, what am I to do ? How can I help Ireland ?’

‘I’ve always thought that your father was one of the noblest men in all our history. Of course he failed. They all failed. Everyone who ever tried to work for Ireland failed. But his failure was so much better than any success. I love to think of him when everyone deserted him and betrayed him, and he was left alone at last.’

‘Don’t reproach me,’ said Sir Gerald earnestly. ‘I love his memory better than you can. I’d rather be like him, even fail like him, than anything in the world. But what can I do ?’ You don’t understand.’

‘No, I don’t understand,’ said Hester. ‘I’m only

a girl, and how can I understand your parties and your politics? I hate them all, and I hate this pretence of helping Ireland, and all the fighting and the bitterness. I only love Ireland.'

What she said was all very disjointed and ridiculous, but behind it was a real emotion amounting to a passion.

'I am ashamed,' he said—'utterly ashamed. Do you know, when I came here a week ago I had my mind made up to let Irish affairs drift, and just to enjoy myself as best I could?'

She turned on him fiercely. 'You can't do that. You are Gerald Geoghegan's son, and you can't live for your own pleasure in Ireland.'

'I know now that I can't. I've seen that since—since you showed it to me. I can't live for my own pleasure, because it would always be spoiled for me by the thought of Ireland; but I can't do anything else, either. I am frightened by every difficulty, and swayed this way and that. I'm nothing but a coward.'

Her mood altered suddenly. 'Don't talk like that,' she said softly. 'I cannot think of you as a coward.'

Her words fell on his ears as he stood a little apart from her, gazing out across the sea. He did not turn to her. There was neither passion nor hope in his voice as he said:

'I might do something and be some good if I had you always with me.'

She shrank away from him silent and frightened. For a while he stood with his head bowed, and did not look at her. Then suddenly he turned to her.

She stood still and looked up at him. 'I do not understand,' she said.

'I do not understand, either, but I love you. Is there anything more that I can say? I love you, Hester, and have loved you since I knew you.'

When she spoke again, it was very softly. 'I suppose I could not have spoken to you as I did—I mean, as I did about your father and Ireland—unless—unless——'

Then she stretched out her hand to him. He took it and held it in his for a long time silently. Then, half frightened at what he did, he drew her to him and kissed her on the lips.

'Hester, you will give me strength and courage in the time to come. You will teach me what to do and what to think. I shall not be a coward any more, or a fool, for I shall always have you with me—always, always.'

'It is very wonderful to think of,' she said. 'It seems too great and good.'

'It is very great. We love each other, and we both love Ireland, and we have all our lives before us.'

'Gerald,' she said—and it seemed to him that her eyes flashed and her whole face glowed with inspiration—'I said that everyone who ever tried to work for

Ireland failed. You and I cannot fail. We have all that goes to secure success.'

'All,' he said. 'And we love each other; so that it will matter nothing to us what the world thinks of us. I have you, Hester, and that will always be enough.'

## CHAPTER IX

O'HARA proved himself a sympathetic companion when he joined his host at Clogher House. If Sir Gerald mixed politics with his first attempt at love-making, he made up for it afterwards by refusing to discuss any subject which did not lead directly or indirectly to Hester. O'Hara listened without apparent boredom to raptures, and even stimulated Sir Gerald by quoting appropriate poetry. He entered whole-heartedly into plans for making Clogher House fit for the reception of its new mistress. He discovered deficiencies in the furniture, and suggested the names of Irish firms who could supply what was wanted. He undertook a complete reformation of the garden and greenhouses, but was defeated by the dour obstinacy of the gardener. Adams was a Scotsman, and proved impervious to blandishments. He declined to accept the kinship which O'Hara offered him as a Gael 'from over the water.' He even scoffed at the editor's favourite theory that the West of Ireland might rival the Channel Islands in the growth of early vegetables and flowers. Mr. Godfrey

who was also called into consultation, was less sympathetic, but a great deal more practical. It was he who suggested new fireplaces for the great reception-rooms, and unearthed a carved marble chimney-piece which had lain in its packing cases since some bygone Geohegan had imported it from Italy. Canon Johnston called to offer his congratulations, and contributed a suggestion that the library should be catalogued and arranged.

It was while he was describing to the other three men the lamentable confusion of the books that an apple of discord fell into the midst of the party. A letter was handed to Sir Gerald which contained a request that he would receive a deputation appointed by the District Council. They wished, so the letter informed him, to propose a scheme for the benefit of the tenants on his estate.

‘Of course, I shall receive them,’ he said, handing the letter to Mr. Godfrey.

‘Well,’ said the agent, ‘I suppose it can’t do any harm to listen to them; but I know what they want, and the thing is impossible.’

‘Who are the members of the deputation?’ asked Canon Johnston.

It appeared that there were three: Father Fahy, Michael McCarty, M.P., and Mr. Walsh, chairman of the District Council.

‘I shouldn’t touch that lot with the end of a forty-foot pole,’ said the Canon when he heard their names.

‘What they want,’ said Mr. Godfrey, ‘is to get you to divide up the grazing-lands and plant them with judicial tenants. That, of course, is quite impossible ; it would mean a loss of a couple of hundred a year to you.’

‘If it is a question,’ said O’Hara, ‘of putting men where bullocks roam, and substituting the smoking homestead for the desolate sheep-walk, it ought to be done at any cost. The true wealth of a nation consists of men, not bullocks.’

Mr. Godfrey and the Canon stared at him, the latter with sheer amazement, the former with scarcely veiled contempt.

‘Surely——’ began the Canon.

‘You are a clergyman,’ said O’Hara. ‘Isn’t there something in the Bible very like a curse for those who add field to field till there is no place left for people to live?’

‘My dear sir,’ said the Canon, ‘you must recognise that it is perfectly absurd to quote the Old Testament prophets as if they wrote about the management of a modern Irish estate. The conditions of life in those times and in those countries were entirely different from our own.’

‘They preached righteousness,’ said O’Hara, ‘and that, I take it, is eternal.’

‘Look here,’ said Mr. Godfrey : ‘there’s no use starting an argument about Isaiah when we’ve got to deal with two blackguards and a particularly rampant kind of priest. You don’t want to lose a couple

of hundred a year ; and even if you are willing to let that go, they'd ask you next day for another two hundred. I know these people, and it's quite impossible to satisfy them. You'd far better leave me to deal with them. I see they want to come here to-morrow. That's the day you are expecting Lady Clonfert and Miss Carew to luncheon. You and Mr. O'Hara stay here and entertain the ladies. I'll deal with the deputation at the office.'

At last Sir Gerald spoke :

'I shall receive the deputation here, and listen to what they have to say. I ask you, Mr. Godfrey, to be present and support me.'

Mr. Godfrey shrugged his shoulders. 'Very well,' he said ; 'I shall be here at twelve o'clock, and if you choose to give in to them, I shall have done my duty in warning you. Perhaps, Canon, you and I had better be getting home.'

'Wait a minute,' said Sir Gerald ; 'I want to understand this business. This land which they want appears to be in my hands at present. Do I farm it myself, or, rather, do you farm it for me ?'

'No,' said Mr. Godfrey ; 'but the men who hold it now can't go into the land courts to get their rents reduced. The tenants Father Fahy wants you to put in can and will. The present men pay the full value of the land. The rent is settled by competition. If they don't like their bargain, they give it up. The new tenants, if we are to have new tenants, will get rents fixed at two-thirds of the market value of the

land. You will lose the difference. I put it at two hundred a year, but it may be more.'

'I see,' said Sir Gerald.

'That's not quite all,' went on Mr. Godfrey. 'What do you suppose happens to the money you lose? It goes straight into the pockets of the men you put on the land. The day after a tenant gets possession of one of your new farms he can sell his interests in it for something between fifty pounds and five hundred before he has so much as put a spade into the ground. Now, Mr. O'Hara, you appear to be a bit of a Socialist: how do you like that for an unearned increment?'

'I see that,' said Sir Gerald. 'That is the price of his fixity of tenure.'

'Of his fixity of tenure,' said Mr. Godfrey, '*and* his artificially fixed rent. But that's not all yet. If you accept Father Fahy's scheme, I suppose you will accept the tenants Father Fahy suggests to you. You will get twenty or thirty poverty-stricken harvest-men from the bogs, without capital enough to buy a cow apiece. They'll start borrowing from the nearest gombeen man at ruinous interest, and you'll have to forgive them half the rent or turn them out. They won't be a pin the better for the change. The only person who will benefit will be Father Fahy.'

'How on earth does he come in?' asked O'Hara.

'Your study of the prophet Isaiah,' said Mr. Godfrey, 'has evidently not taught you the nature of a priest. He'll marry every one of his bankrupt harvest-

men in the inside of six months to a fine healthy girl from off the mountains, and get a five-pound note for each ceremony. Then he'll have a nice little income coming in for the next fifteen years for christening babies at a pound a head, and a trifle extra for churching the mothers. I've been watching philanthropists and Government officials fiddling at these schemes for years back, and I never saw one of them yet good for anything but breeding paupers to pay priests.'

Mr. Godfrey and the Canon took their departure together.

'Who or what is that meddling idiot O'Hara?' asked the agent as they walked down the avenue.

'He runs a paper,' said the Canon. 'I never read a copy of it myself, but I believe he is one of that half-Nationalist lot, like Dennis Browne. There's some excuse for Browne—he's a Roman Catholic; but how any man who's a Protestant and comes of a decent family, as I believe O'Hara does, can mix himself up with that set is more than I can understand.'

'I wish he would keep his mouth shut. I'm greatly afraid Sir Gerald is just the kind of man to be taken with the high-falutin stuff those fellows talk.'

'I call it extremely bad form,' said the Canon, 'if not worse, to go dragging the Bible into a discussion of the kind.'

Sir Gerald and O'Hara sat up far into the night

discussing the situation. The editor quoted more or less appropriate passages from Carlyle, and produced from his own brain sentiments clothed in language which might have been Carlyle's. He fished out a Bible from his portmanteau, and read aloud some terrific denunciations of unrighteousness from Ezekiel and the minor prophets. Sir Gerald was suitably impressed, but kept reverting uneasily to the financial aspect of the question.

'It isn't that I mind about the £200 a year,' he said. 'God knows I don't want to grind the faces of the poor, or extract the last possible penny of rent. But look at the thing this way: is it right for me to pick out, arbitrarily, a handful of my tenants and give them a present that I'm not in a position to give to the rest. Wouldn't that be most unjust—I mean, unjust to everybody else? Then, there's another thing. It's no good putting men without capital on to the land, and it's for the poorest of the poor that I'm asked to do this.'

O'Hara admitted the force of the argument, but clung to his conviction that somehow the thing ought to be done.

'It's better for the land,' he said, 'to be tilled than grazed. It's better for the country to have men in it than bullocks. It's better for the people to have farms to live on than to be pushed away to the degradation of life in the great American cities. It's better for you, too, though you do lose money by it. Why, you have it in your power to become a genuine aristocrat

—one of the good men of the world with power in your hands. You may be a captain of the world's greatest industry.'

'Yes,' said Sir Gerald, 'I see all that. But look here: if I were a shoemaker instead of a landlord, would it be for the good of people in general if I picked out a dozen or so of my customers and gave each a present of a pair of shoes that didn't fit, which would be of no use to them except to sell?'

'I refuse,' said O'Hara, 'to be bound down to that view of the case. This is a great controversy. It's three great controversies rolled into one. It's Homo versus Bos, and I'm on the side of man. It's Ireland or America for our people, and I'm on the side of Ireland. It's money-grubbing or a great captainship for you, and there can be no hesitation about your choice.'

'For heaven's sake, O'Hara, talk sense,' said Sir Gerald peevishly.

'I am talking sense. I am talking the only real kind of sense there is in the world, but I'll climb down if you like. Here's the situation: You admit my principles. I can't answer your political economy, or, rather, Mr. Godfrey's, for it was he who blocked us with these money questions. Now, there must be some way out of the difficulty. We are both right, and all we want is some suggestion, probably a ridiculously simple one, to join our two rights into a possible course of action. There is just one man I

know who might be able to help us. He's the ablest man in Ireland to-day. Will you let me lay the matter before him ?

'There is no time,' said Sir Gerald. 'The deputation comes to-morrow.'

'There is time enough. The man I mean lives within a mile of your gate. His name is John O'Neill.'

Sir Gerald remained silent.

'I know it is a good deal to ask of you,' said O'Hara.

'I don't like him. I believe him to be responsible for a most insulting and quite unprovoked attack on me.'

'Once,' said O'Hara, 'there was a king called Ahab, and he went to his death because he would not listen to the advice of a prophet. Do you remember why he wouldn't listen ? "For he doth not speak good concerning me, but evil."'

'You ought to have been a parson, O'Hara.'

'Well, may I consult Micaiah, the son of Imlah ?'

'I don't see how he can help us,' said Sir Gerald ; 'but I will go with you to-morrow and call on him.'

Sir Gerald went to bed in no mood for self-congratulation. Yet, though he did not know it, he had done a great day's work. He had set himself free from leading-strings, and had taken a line of his own in opposition to his agent. He had stood firm against O'Hara's rhetoric. He had decided on

visiting and consulting John O'Neill, although he partly realized that in doing so he would outrage the dearest prejudices of the people who were naturally his friends.

O'Neill was still lingering over the remains of his breakfast next morning when his visitors were announced. He was an admirer of O'Hara's work in *The Critic*, although the editor had more than once condemned unsparingly the actions of the Parliamentary party. O'Hara wrote as a gentleman and a man of scrupulous honour, and O'Neill recognised the justice of some of his attacks. Once he had favoured *The Critic* with a letter, a characteristic apology for a particularly outrageous incident in the agitation for which the chief admitted his responsibility. 'If we were engaged,' he wrote, 'in a controversy with men who recognised the force of reason, or who wanted to legislate for the good of Ireland, I should refrain from advocating the policy which you condemn. Unfortunately, we are carrying on a war with the leaders of a nation for whom appeals to reason or justice are of no force whatever. English politicians are, in the first place, incurably stupid, and, in the next place, determined to exploit Ireland for the benefit of their own country. The only weapon which remains to us is force. We must render the government of Ireland impossible until substantial justice is done to us.' O'Hara printed the letter with a note, characterizing it as a piece of diabolical cynicism. O'Neill never again attempted to justify

himself in the columns of *The Critic*; but he respected O'Hara, and welcomed the opportunity of making his acquaintance.

When he entered the study where Sir Gerald and O'Hara awaited him, he simply bowed, and sat down opposite his visitors.

'I presume, gentlemen,' he said, 'since you have come here at ten o'clock in the morning, that you have some business to transact with me. If I am right, we need not waste time in saying we are glad to see each other.'

Sir Gerald felt strongly inclined to leave the house at once. His statement, when he brought himself to make one, was bald, and he left it to O'Hara to ask for the advice they had come to get.

'I take it for granted,' said O'Neill, 'that you wish to act for the benefit of your tenants. Otherwise I think your wisest plan will be to leave the whole matter in Mr. Godfrey's hands.' Sir Gerald nodded, and O'Neill went on: 'You realize that if you attempt to carry through any scheme of reform on your estate you will have to face the opposition of your agent and the hostility of the neighbouring landowners.'

'I am prepared for that,' said Sir Gerald.

'You are perhaps not aware,' continued O'Neill, 'that if you want to do real good you will also have to face the hostility of the people you are working for. I believe you will not shrink from unpopularity. You come here with good credentials, you are the son

of a great man, and you come with a good introduction when you come with Mr. O'Hara.'

Sir Gerald felt his sense of offended dignity vanish as O'Neill spoke. He found himself waiting for the chief's next words with an assurance that his course would be made clear to him, and that he would have no choice but to follow it.

'Your difficulty,' said O'Neill, 'has long been familiar to me, and, indeed, to everyone who follows the course of the expensive experiments which Englishmen insist on trying in this unfortunate country. Of course Mr. Godfrey is perfectly right in saying that it is folly or worse to make a present of the tenant's interest in the proposed farms to a set of paupers. It's wrong to make presents of that kind to anyone, and it's folly to put men without capital on the land. Your new tenants must pay for what they get. When you have divided up your grazing-land, put the tenants' interest up to auction. You'll get more than its proper value in each case. Taking Mr. Godfrey's figures as correct, you ought to get £6,000 for the tenants' interest in your new farms. That would be your £200 a year capitalized at a little over 3 per cent., roughly speaking. You probably will get nearer £8,000, because all over the country farmers are willing to give more than the right value for the privilege of paying a judicial rent. Now comes your second difficulty. When your new tenant has paid this fine—which he will pay willingly—he will be practically a pauper. He won't be able

to stock or work his farm. I suggest that you lend him the money he has just paid you, at such a rate of interest as will bring you in the £200 a year you stand to lose by the fixing of the judicial rents. You see how the thing works out. You get between rent and interest what you always did get for the land. No land court can touch the interest on your bond. You also get the kind of man you want as tenant—the man who has money to pay his way. He in his turn is saved from being pauperized by a gift which could only in the end destroy his self-respect and self-reliance. How does the plan strike you? I hope,’ he added, smiling, ‘that Mr. O’Hara will not find it profoundly immoral or diabolically cynical.’

‘It is a beautiful financial dodge,’ said O’Hara. It’s the most beautiful dodge I ever heard of. But I don’t know why on earth you put us up to it. You’ve worked all your life as if you hated landlords. You’ve done more than anyone else to rob them systematically, and now you show us a way to defeat the law you fought for yourself.’

‘You quite mistake my position,’ said O’Neill. ‘I don’t hate landlords in the least. There is nothing in the world I’d rather have than the Irish aristocracy on my side. Unfortunately, I can’t get them. They are English at heart, and not Irish; therefore, like everything else that stands in the way of Irish nationality, they have got to go. We have taken their power and most of their influence from them. Now we are taking their property. I am sorry for it.

I would rather they were with us to help to govern Ireland in the days that are coming. If they choose to cling to England, I can't help it. They will be robbed more and more. But who robs them? Their own friends, the English Government. Why could they not have understood twenty years ago that the English care nothing for them or their properties? If they had stood by their country, they would have been sitting to-day in an Irish Parliament helping to govern Ireland, instead of licking the boots of politicians in Westminster, who will go on betraying them right to the end.'

He paused.

'Go on,' said Sir Gerald. 'I want to hear more of what you think about Ireland.'

'I think that, if you mean to meet your deputation at twelve o'clock, you had better be going. I'm glad if I have been of any use to you, but I don't think it is good for you to talk politics to me. I am on the other side, you know.'

'Sir Gerald is on the side of Ireland,' said O'Hara; 'so am I, and so are you.'

'Ah!' said O'Neill. 'Then, we ought all to be on the same side. Isn't that so? But, you see, we are not. There are some things you would not do for Ireland, Mr. O'Hara—so you tell us in *The Critic* now and again. There are some things Sir Gerald wouldn't do, either. You see, you are both gentlemen, and gentlemen don't do certain things. Well, I do them—the dirty things not fit for gentlemen. I

do them, and I expect my followers to do them—for Ireland. So you see, Mr. Editor, though we are all three for Ireland, we can't be on the same side, can we ?

He rose and held out his hand to Sir Gerald.

‘ Unless,’ he said, smiling slightly, ‘ you would rather not shake hands with a man who is on my side in politics.’

## CHAPTER X

SIR GERALD, Mr. Godfrey, and Mr. O'Hara awaited the deputation in the great gallery of Clogher House. Mr. Godfrey was extremely uncomfortable and anxious lest his employer should make a fool of himself. Sir Gerald had an annoying feeling that he had not treated his agent fairly. He awaited rather nervously the explanation which he knew must come, and the protest which was sure to follow it. O'Hara suffered from misgivings about the wisdom of having brought Sir Gerald and O'Neill together. All three wished the interview with the deputation well over.

Sir Gerald observed with some curiosity and wonder the conduct of the visitors when they arrived. He had gathered from Mr. Godfrey's tone that Father Fahy was the man he had really to deal with ; but the priest kept himself in the background. He walked down the long gallery behind his colleagues, and saluted Sir Gerald with a deprecating bow. His manner and attitude were those of a man who has been forced, rather against his will, into a position which he feels to be doubtful. The chairman of the District Council was fidgety and ill-at-ease. Michael

McCarty alone seemed sure of himself and satisfied with the part he had to play.

It was he who produced a lengthy document and read from it a quite surprising list of figures. He showed how Sir Gerald's property was for the most part divided between two classes of tenants. There were a few who held big tracts of land and paid large rents. There was a large number living on holdings of five or six acres. He then described the condition of these small tenants, showing, by careful estimates of their possibilities of making money off their land, how difficult it was for them to exist under the most favourable circumstances. He quoted figures to show how many of them emigrated to the United States, and how many went every year to England or Scotland as agricultural labourers. 'The whole potential wealth of the district,' so the document concluded, 'is in the hands of the landlord and a few individuals who refuse to develop it. The great majority of the people live under conditions which condemn them to hopeless poverty.'

'I remember reading an address,' said Mr. Godfrey, 'which you presented some time ago to Mr. Chesney. You wanted the Government to build some light railways. You then represented this district as a perfect hive of industry and prosperity, which required nothing but a few steam tramways to make it wealthy and contented. How do you account for the discrepancy between that statement and the one you have just read to us?'

The deputation consulted together in whispers. It was apparently Father Fahy who suggested the answer to which Mr. Walsh gave utterance, with a smile of engaging simplicity.

‘Them statistics, which you refer to, Mr. Godfrey, was compiled for an entirely different purpose.’

Mr. Godfrey also smiled.

‘And which of the two sets,’ he asked, ‘comes nearest to the actual truth?’

‘Sure, then, Mr. Godfrey,’ said Walsh, ‘you wouldn’t be wishing us to miss the chance of getting what might be got out of the Government. What harm would it do anyone if they spent a few pounds in the country?’

‘Well,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘perhaps you’ll tell us now for what purpose these statistics were compiled?’

‘We propose,’ said McCarty, ‘that the grazing-lands at present in your own hands should be divided into farms of twenty acres or thereabouts, and let to the tenants who are at present living on smaller farms. In complying with our request you will confer a lasting benefit upon the tenants. You will ameliorate——’

Sir Gerald cut him short.

‘The day I arrived in Clogher, Mr. McCarty, you called me a tyrant and a bloodsucker. I think these were the words. Now, do you think it is any use appealing to a tyrant and a bloodsucker to confer a benefit on anyone or to ameliorate anything?’

Mr. Godfrey breathed a sudden sigh of relief. After all, it seemed that Sir Gerald was not going to give himself away. He hastened to share in the discomfiture of the foe, and for the first time spoke with his usual confidence. 'Mr. Walsh,' he said, 'you're a business man, and a successful one in your own line. Don't you know perfectly well that the first thing the new tenants would do would be to go into the land courts and get their rents reduced? Do you seriously propose that Sir Gerald is to submit to a loss of £200 a year for the sake of a set of men who have never done anything but abuse him or his predecessors, and who wouldn't even so much as pretend to be grateful?'

No one answered, or indeed heeded, Mr. Godfrey's question. There was a struggle going on between McCarty and the priest. It seemed as if Father Fahy were trying to restrain his friend. At last McCarty thrust the priest aside. He took a step forward and raised his hand. His eyes shone, and it was clear that he was under the spell of a strong emotion. Mr. Godfrey leaned back with a smile. He was quite satisfied that in his excitement McCarty would say something outrageous, which would alienate for ever any lingering sympathy Sir Gerald might have with the deputation. McCarty spoke as if he were delivering an oration to a crowded assembly. He gesticulated with his hands. His voice rose almost to a shout.

'Mr. Godfrey,' he said, 'you'll bear me witness

that I speak the truth. What I am going to tell Sir Gerald Geoghegan is down in the books of the estate. After the famine the people were cleared off the very lands we're talking of. It's nothing but our own old homes we ask for back again. My own mother, sir, was a girl at the time. Her mother was turned out, and she a widow with young children. She was a decent woman—one that worked hard, and paid her rent, and reared her family well. Yes, and she loved your people. They were the old stock, and why wouldn't she love them? But it's little your uncle cared. He turned her and her children out on to the roadside. He burnt the house before their eyes. They might have starved, and they would have starved—as many a family starved on the roadside in those days—but for a brother of my grandmother's that took them in, into the same little cabin where my mother is living this minute. We haven't forgotten, sir, and we can't forget—never, so long as the breath of life is in us—what happened in those times, nor how your people treated our people. If I spoke of you as a tyrant, didn't them that went before you deserve the name of us? And I say this——'

'Hush to you now!' said the priest. 'Isn't that enough for you to say? Don't you see that Sir Gerald is wanting to speak?'

Mr. Godfrey, still smiling, glanced at O'Hara. He already turned over in his mind the sweets of his coming triumph.

Sir Gerald spoke quietly, almost coldly, but with a

certain tension in his voice. What McCarty said had moved him.

‘I make this proposal to you, gentlemen. I shall divide up the land in question, as you wish, into farms of about twenty acres each. I shall fix the rents at a figure which the land court is not likely to reduce. I shall then put the tenants’ interest in the new farms up to public auction, exactly as is done every day by outgoing tenants. The money I receive from these sales I shall be prepared to lend to the incoming tenants at a moderate rate of interest. I shall thus secure myself from loss, and at the same time get a class of tenants who have capital enough to work the land.’

The members of the deputation consulted together in whispers. Then for the first time the priest took a leading part in the proceedings. ‘May I ask,’ he said, ‘whether this plan is of Mr. Godfrey’s making, or whether the gentleman on your left hand had anything to do with it?’

‘I don’t see,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘that it matters in the least who proposed the plan. I have laid it before you, and I am prepared to act on it.’

‘Have you considered,’ said the priest—and this time there was a note of menace in his voice—‘what will happen if the League forbids anyone to take the farms on your terms? How will you be situated with your land striped and the graziers gone?’

‘Surely,’ said O’Hara, ‘the League has more sense

than to issue such an order. I don't believe the people would obey it if they did.'

'We should like,' said the priest, 'to report your proposal to the District Council before we say what we think of it.'

'Report it to the League, you mean,' said Mr. Godfrey as the deputation withdrew. 'Everyone knows the Council daren't do anything but what the League tells them.'

After they were gone, he shook Sir Gerald warmly by the hand.

'I congratulate you,' he said. 'You cornered the blackguards neatly. You need never divide that land at all. Father Fahy runs the League, and you may take your oath he won't have your plan at any price. The man who is prepared to put down a good round fine for his farm is a careful and independent man. That's not the class Father Fahy wants to see settled on the land. I wish, though, you'd told me beforehand what you were going to do. I felt infernally anxious, quite thought you might give in. Instead of that, you've taken as neat a score off them as I ever heard of.'

'I'm afraid you're mistaken,' said Sir Gerald. 'I didn't mean to score off them. I admit the justice of what they said, and I think the people ought to have the land.'

'Oh, quite so,' said Mr. Godfrey, smiling.

'You don't appear to think,' said O'Hara, 'that Sir Gerald is in earnest. I don't know how you can

expect him to listen to the story of those famine clearances without wanting to do something in atonement for all the suffering.'

'My dear sir,' said Mr. Godfrey, 'I haven't the smallest objection to your kind of philanthropy and fine talk as long as it doesn't cost money. In this case I feel perfectly safe. Father Fahy is the master of the League, and there is just as much chance of his turning Protestant as of his allowing the people to accept that proposal.'

His coolly contemptuous tone nettled O'Hara.

'I think,' he said, 'Father Fahy won't have much of a say this time. The League has got another master, as you know very well, Mr. Godfrey. John O'Neill is a bigger man than Father Fahy.'

'I dare say he is,' said Mr. Godfrey; 'but I don't see any reason for supposing that he'll interfere in the matter one way or other.'

'There is a very good reason, though,' said O'Hara. 'The plan is his own from start to finish. Sir Gerald and I consulted him this morning.'

'Is this true?' asked Mr. Godfrey, turning to Sir Gerald.

'Perfectly true. I meant to have told you myself, and told you in a different way, but it is as well for you to know now. I'm sorry, though, that you have heard it in the way you have.'

'Sir Gerald,' said Mr. Godfrey after a short pause, 'I ask you to accept my resignation of the agency. I absolutely decline to share the management of your

estate with John O'Neill. Thank God, I have neither wife nor child, and am an independent man. I can live on what I have, but I'd rather starve in a ditch than associate myself with a man who is a rebel and a murderer. I'll say this, too: If John O'Neill is to be your confidant and friend, I decline the honour of your acquaintance.'

O'Hara and Sir Gerald stared blankly at each other when Mr. Godfrey left them.

'The fat is in the fire,' said O'Hara, 'and no mistake!'

'This is frightful,' said Sir Gerald; 'I couldn't have believed it possible that political prejudice could have driven a man so far.'

'Well, I'm not sure that I should call it simply political prejudice. You see, Godfrey went through the "bad times" here. He was a great friend of that poor fellow Morris who was shot. He was fired at himself once or twice. That kind of thing leaves its mark on a man.'

'I'm sorry,' said Sir Gerald, 'more sorry than I can say, that this has happened.'

'I'm sorry, too; but, after all, the man was impossible. Nothing can be done with men of that stamp. He belongs to the old order. He would always have been a thorn in your side. In the new Ireland, where all classes are to unite for the common good of their country, there is no room for the irreconcilables.'

'I shall ask him to reconsider his decision.'

‘Not a bit of use. He won’t do that unless you apologize for consulting John O’Neill, and promise him to be a good boy and never do such a thing again.’

‘That’s impossible, of course,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I crossed my rubicon this morning. If Godfrey won’t keep on the agency, I shall ask O’Neill to suggest someone to take his place.’

‘I don’t think,’ said O’Hara, laughing, ‘that you can exactly ask O’Neill to recommend an agent to you. Of course he is an able man and all that, but—well, it would be rather like a shepherd asking the wolf for the name of a good reliable watch-dog. Besides, I don’t think you ought to get too thick with O’Neill. He is a marked man, very indelibly marked indeed. There is no use your flying in the face of prejudice. You ought to aim at arousing a national spirit among the upper classes. You have a magnificent opportunity, and you must not throw it away by getting yourself branded at the outset as a friend of John O’Neill’s. If you do, you will make an enemy of every gentleman in Ireland, and your influence will be gone.’

‘O’Hara, you are the merest dreamer. I’ve not had a twentieth part of your experience of Ireland, but I know this—that the hope of rousing our gentry to a sense of patriotism is a delusion. Look at Godfrey and his conduct to-day—and he’s a type.’

It appeared that O’Hara was right in supposing that Mr. Godfrey would persist in his determination to

resign the agency. The next morning brought a letter from him.

‘I hope you will understand,’ he wrote, ‘that I take this step solely because it is impossible for me to associate myself with Mr. John O’Neill in the management of your estate. I have spent forty years of my life in fighting Irish agitators, and I am too old now to change the colour of my coat and adapt my ways to theirs. I hope that you will not think that I bear you, personally, any ill-will. I may have spoken too strongly in your house to-day. I was very much amazed and shocked at what you told me. If I said anything which seemed to you offensive, I ask you to accept my apologies. Now that our relations as employer and employed are at an end, I hope you will allow me, as an older man and your sincere well-wisher, to offer you a piece of advice. Do not drift into an intimacy with John O’Neill. You are bound to discover sooner or later that he is an entirely unscrupulous man. I give you my opinion of him deliberately and carefully. He has no sense of honour, nor any conscience capable of distinguishing right from wrong. It is not possible for you to be his friend without finding yourself committed, sooner or later, to some course of which you cannot possibly approve.’

O’Hara’s comment on the letter was characteristic :

‘He has blotted himself out of the book of the living. He has disappeared as the rest of the class to which he belongs is disappearing. It is a pity, for

it is gentlemen that Ireland wants to-day, and will want more in the future.'

It is likely that O'Hara was right. The future historian will probably view the ruin of the Irish aristocracy as a great, though inevitable, misfortune. The end of the seventeenth century saw the passing away of one Irish aristocracy. The Jacobite nobility and gentry, who were driven from the service of Ireland into that of France, Spain, and Austria, were lost through their incurable loyalty to a King who was a fool. Ireland suffered. She lay like a corpse for a century. Yet her case was not wholly hopeless, because the aristocracy she lost was succeeded by another. Strong men took the place of those who were gone, and they in their turn learnt to be Irishmen. After breathing the atmosphere of Ireland for a hundred years, this race of men rose up, demanded and got freedom for the country of their adoption. The end of the nineteenth century saw the ruin, the beginning of the twentieth will see the final extinction, of this aristocracy. It is curious that they, too, are perishing through mistaken loyalty. They have quite forgotten that their grandfathers stood for Irish nationality. They have chosen to call themselves English. In the future men will speak of them as stupid and blind almost beyond belief, but no one will call them either cowardly or base. At different stages of the struggle they might have saved themselves and led a really united Ireland in a great battle for nationality. They never did, and never would.

They conceived of themselves as an English garrison, and held loyalty to England as their prime duty. Never, surely, not even in the case of James II., has loyalty been so hopelessly misplaced. England has betrayed them again and again, has deliberately sacrificed them not once or twice. There is probably no more pathetic instance of dog-like fidelity than the way the Irish gentry have turned, and still turn, to lick the foot that spurns them. This has been their grand mistake, their crime, since excessive stupidity must in history be reckoned for a crime. The peasantry whom they despised were wiser; for long ago, in their own tongue, they made a proverb which might have saved the gentry if they had known it: 'Beware of the head of a bull, of the heels of a horse, of the smile of an Englishman.'

## CHAPTER XI

THERE is a passage somewhere in his works in which Swift expresses his admiration of the excellent bishops sent over in his time from England to govern the Irish Church. Unfortunately, as the Dean points out, these worthy men were invariably attacked by highwaymen shortly after leaving London. Their robes and their papers were taken from them, and the impudent robbers travelled over to Ireland and entered into possession of the vacant sees, thereby working quite incalculable mischief. Something of the same kind seems to have been happening ever since. England, indeed, no longer sends over bishops. She now devises laws for the government of the country, and sends them over to Dublin Castle by post or telegraph. The laws when they leave Westminster are admirable, as admirable as the bishops whose fate Swift deplored. Unfortunately, some subtle change comes over them before they cross St. George's Channel. We can hardly lay the blame on highwaymen nowadays. Besides, would any highwayman, even a desperate and broken barrister, care to steal an Act of Parliament? We must imagine that there

lurks somewhere in Wales a malevolent Celtic sprite who finds a pleasure in effecting those subtle changes in the beautiful laws of the English Parliament which make them such troublesome and harmful enactments when they arrive. It may be difficult for the modern mind to accept the existence of this sprite, but the only other hypothesis which would account for the facts of the case is that the laws made by the collective wisdom of Great Britain are not wise laws. This is, of course, wholly impossible to believe, and we are thrown back, until scientific men investigate the matter further, on the hypothesis of a supernatural agency.

Nothing, for instance, could have been more admirable, when it left Westminster, than the statute which regulates the local government of Ireland. The genius for politics which has always characterized England's dealings with inferior races suggested a clause which forbade any priest or minister of religion becoming a member of a board or council. Nothing could have been wiser. Everyone knows that if the Nationalist priests and Orange parsons could only be kept from interfering, Irish local politicians would work calmly and unitedly for the people's good. Clearly, the Local Government Act was in a fair way to solve the whole problem of Irish government. Unfortunately, owing to one of those subtle changes, which, except on the Welsh sprite hypothesis, it is impossible to explain, the plan didn't work out. Priests don't, of course, sit on local boards as elected

members. They preside over preliminary meetings of the particular League which happens at the time to be in fashion. Here the business of local government is discussed, resolutions are prepared, and affairs come before the actual board or council merely to receive formal approval.

Thus, it happened that Sir Gerald's proposal for dealing with his land was brought before the local branch of the League. The nominal president of the branch was John O'Neill, but local politics interested him very little, and he generally left it to Father Fahy to act as chairman of the meetings. The priest had worked hard beforehand to insure a decisive rejection of Sir Gerald's proposal. He knew very well that most of the farmers and many of the shopkeepers would regard the suggested terms as fair, and would be prepared to give the plan a trial. In Ireland, however, it is always quite possible to induce an assembly collectively to give a vote of which every individual voter disapproves. If you can privately persuade each man that he is likely to find himself a member of a small and obnoxious minority, he will readily agree, not only to hold his tongue, but to give his vote to what he conceives to be the popular side. Father Fahy was an adept at the art of private persuasion. He called it 'personal explanation.' He and his curates worked hard, with the result that, when the day of the meeting arrived, he felt fairly confident of securing a contemptuous rejection of the proposal he disliked.

He was surprised to find, on his arrival, that John O'Neill occupied the chair. He didn't understand why the president should have chosen this particular occasion for taking part in the proceedings of the League. It did not appear, however, that the chairman's part was likely to be an active one. After the briefest possible description of the business before the meeting, O'Neill called on Father Fahy to give an account of the work of the deputation.

The priest rose to the occasion. He told his audience the well-known tale of the clearances which followed the famine years. He reminded them of the ruined cottages and broken fences which were scattered over the wide ranches where the cattle grazed. He told them of their sons and daughters driven away to America, through want of employment and the impossibility of getting land. He compared Ireland to Egypt on the night of the last great plague.

'There is not a house,' he said, 'in the land but mourns its first-born, gone as completely as if death had taken him. For all this a remedy is at hand. You are starving in the midst of plenty. Land, land in abundance, is at your doors—the very land which your fathers tilled, land that to-day would support your sons, where brave men might build homes for your daughters.'

Every word the priest said was true; and his audience recognised the truth, not as an abstract proposition, but as a matter of personal experience. They had felt the poverty, and the bitterness of part-

ing. As the speech reached its climax it was interrupted with cheer after cheer. The priest held up his hand for silence. He went on to describe Sir Gerald's answer to the deputation. He stated the proposed terms honestly enough, but he allowed his audience no time to grasp their meaning.

'What he demands is this,' he continued: 'You are to give him your savings. You are to beg their wages from your children in America. You are to toil in the harvest-fields of England. You—you who can scarcely fill your mouths with bread—you are to give him £6,000; you are to give it to him in return for land that by the right of God's law is your own already. And that is not all. You are to be his debtors, too. You are to sign yourself into the worst slavery the world knows of—bondage to the gombeen-man. We have known our landlords as tyrants in the past, and learnt to hate them. For the future we are to see them as usurers as well, and learn to despise them.'

The meeting was worked up to a frenzy of excitement. There were shouts; sticks and hats were waved. John O'Neill alone seemed perfectly unmoved. During the earlier part of the speech he had scribbled idly on the paper before him. Afterwards he took a book from his pocket and read it, leaning back in his chair.

Michael McCarty followed Father Fahy. He described Sir Gerald's proposal as a trap. 'It emanates,' he said, 'from the rent office. It is worthy of the

worst traditions of the old Orange ascendancy. We can guess at its author. We know of old the malignant craft of the hireling who oppresses and enslaves us. Let us fling it back in the teeth of its author and his employer. Let us tell Mr. Godfrey and Sir Gerald Geoghegan that we prefer open war to the poison of pretended friendship. Are they afraid to meet us with the arms of men, that they attack us with the cunning of hell?

Mr. Walsh rose next. His position was a difficult one. He had to speak to an audience excited to fever-heat and craving for the stimulus of violent words. The possibilities of the English language were completely exhausted; there were really no more terrific phrases left. Under the circumstances, he probably did wisely in simply proposing a resolution which declared Sir Gerald's scheme to be detestable.

Then O'Neill rose slowly to his feet. He looked round the meeting with a half-smile, which hardened gradually about the corners of his mouth, as his eyes rested on Father Fahy. When he spoke, his cold, unimpassioned tones held the audience silent by force of their contrast with what had gone before.

'Before this resolution is seconded,' he said, 'I should like to say that in attributing Sir Gerald Geoghegan's proposal to Mr. Godfrey you are putting the saddle on the wrong horse. The scheme which you seem inclined to condemn is mine. I was the author of it. I suggested it to Sir Gerald Geoghegan.'

He sat down again and took up his book, which he

had left face downwards on the table. There was dead silence in the room. No man looked at another, and if by chance one caught his neighbour's eye, he looked away. After allowing the silence to continue for a minute, which seemed like an hour, O'Neill rose again.

'Does anyone now second Mr. Walsh's motion?'

There was the faintest possible emphasis on the word 'now.'

Walsh himself got slowly, as if by painful effort, on to his feet.

'After what our honoured president has just told us,' he said, 'I should like to withdraw my——'

Father Fahy sprang up. His face was crimson with passion. His hands convulsively gripped the back of the chair in front of him.

'I second the motion,' he shouted. 'I denounce the scheme as treachery; and I proclaim the author of it, whoever he may be, as a reptile traitor to the people of Ireland.'

There was a horse yell from the audience. Men leaped to their feet, and clenched fists were shaken in the air. The priest's voice was drowned. He scrambled on to the table in front of O'Neill, and stood above the crowd with outstretched arms, vociferating. There was a sudden sway in the audience. Someone crashed against the table and upset it. Father Fahy fell with it. In a moment he was up again. His cheek was cut, and the blood flowed down into his mouth as he gasped for breath. The tumult ceased

instantly, and men drew back from him half frightened.

‘I am afraid,’ said John O’Neill, ‘that Father Fahy has hurt himself. We shall be deprived of the rest of his, no doubt, interesting speech.’ The ghost of a smile hovered round his lips as he watched his adversary spitting out the blood, and he added: ‘If the table had been stronger, the speech might have been longer.’

The priest’s position was sufficiently ridiculous, and laughter, of a kind, follows as a reaction on any violent excitement. Someone giggled. Father Fahy looked round him. Laughter, half suppressed or wholly uncontrolled, was on every face. The major excommunication which his Church has devised for the annihilation of obstinate heretics would have been too gentle a form of words to express what he felt. He pushed his way sullenly from the room. O’Neill remained standing, and again addressed the meeting: ‘Before I put to the meeting the motion which you have heard proposed and seconded, I should like to say a few words on the subject myself. You want land. Very well. Sir Gerald Geoghegan offers you land. He offers it on certain terms. Are they fair? I address a certain number of shopkeepers. When you offer your goods to the public, you expect to be paid for them. I also address farmers. When you give up a piece of land, you expect to be paid for your interest in it. That is fair. Sir Gerald Geoghegan expects to be paid, too, in exactly the same way.

What is fair in one case is fair in the other. The only difference is that if you sell a thing you expect to handle the price. Sir Gerald is content to let his money lie in your hands at an extremely low rate of interest. There is no trap of any sort. The plan, as I told you before, is mine. Is it likely that I would join a landlord in setting a trap for you? I shall now put Mr. Walsh's motion to the meeting.'

Mr. Walsh rose to his feet and requested permission to withdraw his motion. No one offered any objection.

'Very well,' said O'Neill. 'We may, then, take it for granted that at its next meeting the District Council will thank Sir Gerald Geoghegan for his generous response to their request.'

The meeting broke up. Excitement and cheering induce thirst, and little groups of men made their way to one or another of the various public-houses. John O'Neill beckoned McCarty to come to him.

'Well?' he said, and then waited. The apology he seemed to expect was forthcoming.

'I'm sorry,' said his follower, 'for what occurred at the meeting to-day. Of course, if I'd known the scheme was yours I should not have spoken as I did.'

'I suppose not,' said O'Neill. 'Why did you let the priest talk you over? I've repeatedly told you to be careful about allowing yourself to be led by the nose by the priests. They are more or less on our side now, but they will desert us when it comes

to the pinch. The Church doesn't want an independent Ireland. It gets too much money out of England to want to cut the connection.'

'I'm sorry,' said McCarty ; 'but it's all right, isn't it? You beat Father Fahy to-day.'

'Yes, I beat him to-day. But shall I always be able to beat him?'

'I don't know. The priests distrust you. For one thing, they don't like your being a Protestant. Then, they think you've got too much power. I think they would like to beat you.'

'I know all that. But is there anything else—anything new that I ought to know?'

'Well, Father Fahy has sounded me two or three times lately. The last time was just after the Bishop's visit here. He asked me what you were going to do when the question of the immigration of the foreign Religious Orders came up next session.'

'Ah! Now, what might Father Fahy and his Bishop think about that matter?'

'He says that it's a Church question, and that the Irish party are bound to support the Government.'

'Thank you,' said O'Neill. 'I think I'll wish you good-bye now. If Father Fahy asks you again what I'm going to do, you'll be able to say, with perfect truthfulness, that you haven't the slightest idea.'

Father Fahy was no more inclined than O'Neill to regard his defeat as final and decisive. He was well aware that at various moments in recent Irish history

his Order had been extremely unpopular. As a young man he had seen a too energetic parish priest dragged by his heels down the street of a Connaught town. He himself had once had blood drawn from his nose by the fist of a Poor Law Guardian, the matter in dispute being nothing more important than the election of a dispensary doctor. On every occasion, however, on which it had arisen the anti-clerical feeling had rapidly subsided; and experience confirmed his conviction that there was no power in Ireland able to seriously threaten that of the Church.

Still, the present crisis demanded prompt action. He washed his face, brushed the dust off his coat, took his hat, and started by the next train to consult his Bishop.

As he told his story, the old ecclesiastic sat in silence. His forehead gathered into deeper and deeper wrinkles while he listened. His thick grizzled eyebrows came almost to meet each other across his forehead, and hung heavily over his eyes. His great shapeless lower lip pushed itself further and further out, until the few jagged teeth which still remained behind it became visible.

‘You are too hot-headed, Father Fahy,’ he said, when the story ended. ‘I sent you to Clogher because I thought there was a reasonable prospect of your keeping quiet there. Now you have got into a fresh row. Do you want to be banished to one of the islands?’

‘I could not help myself,’ said Father Fahy. ‘The whole thing was sprung on me suddenly. I made sure I should carry the people with me as usual.’

‘Is John O’Neill generally present at your meetings?’

‘I never saw him at one before.’

‘Don’t you think you ought to have been cautious when you did see him? Besides, you ought to have realized that the scheme you have described to me couldn’t possibly have been the work of a man like Mr. Godfrey. It was surely obvious that you ought to have waited until you knew what influences were at work.’

‘But,’ said the priest, ‘if I had done nothing, the scheme would have been accepted by the League, and then my poor people would have lost the chance of getting a bit of land they could live on. You know, my lord, the well-off men and the shopkeepers would have snatched it all up. And my poor people—oh, if you could see them! But, sure, you know as well as I do how very poor they are, and the way the boys and girls are going off, the very best of them. And who is to blame them? Look at the life they lead at home here on the bogs and in the cabins.’

The Bishop’s face softened.

‘I’m not blaming you,’ he said, ‘for opposing the scheme. A priest’s first duty is to the poorest of his flock, and I’ll say this for you, you have always had a heart for the poor. But you are far too hot-headed.

There are more ways of wrecking a thing you don't like than flying straight in the face of it. Tell me, what sort of man is this Sir Gerald Geoghegan? He doesn't seem to be the common type of Protestant Tory. Most of them would see their estates, their tenants, and themselves, go to perdition before they would take advice from John O'Neill.

'I don't know much about him,' said the priest.

'Don't you think you ought to?'

'It is very hard to find out anything,' said Father Fahy. 'His servants are nearly all Protestants.'

'I didn't ask you to come here with a letter from a kitchen-maid in your pocket. I don't inquire about the sources of your information, but I expect you to know the people in your parish. Now, I'll tell you something about this Sir Gerald Geoghegan. He is the son of Gerald Geoghegan the Young Ireland leader, the man who headed the rebellion in '48. He may turn out to be the most dangerous kind of man in Ireland to-day. Of course, I know nothing about him personally. He may be a fool or a coward; but if he is the kind of man his father was, and if he makes friends with John O'Neill, it may be a serious matter.'

'I shall try and find out about him.'

'There is another matter,' said the Bishop: 'I want to know how O'Neill stands with his followers.'

'I tried to find that out. They seem to be very loyal to him. I don't know why, for he bullies them and treats them like dogs.'

‘O’Neill is a great man,’ said the Bishop. ‘He is a man that the Church will have to reckon with some time, and I think the day is getting very near. Did you succeed in getting any information as to how he is going to act in this agitation about the immigration of the foreign Religious Orders? Will he support the Government if we ask him to? Or will he make use of this ridiculous “No Popery” cry that England seems likely to go mad over?’

‘No one seems to know what line he will take,’ said the priest.

The Bishop frowned heavily.

‘It would be better,’ he said, ‘if we knew. We may have to fight him over this very question. Now I dare say you ought to be going, if you want to catch your train. I’ll just give you my advice before you leave. You had better lie up for a week and nurse that cut on your face. It looks painful, and if the people think they have really hurt you, they will be sorry all the sooner for to-day’s proceedings. Watch John O’Neill and watch this new landlord. I must know what kind of man he is, and whether he is going to join O’Neill’s political party. You can manipulate the League a little—quietly, you know. Pass a few resolutions about landlords in general, but leave Sir Gerald and his plan alone for the present. If O’Neill and Sir Gerald make friends, you may be able to suggest that O’Neill is going over to the landlord. They won’t believe you at first, but there will be no harm done by the suggestion. I think that’s all.’

Father Fahy knelt for the Bishop's blessing. When he rose, he said :

‘But shall I be able to get that land for my poor people?’

‘We shall see about that,’ said the Bishop. ‘There is a good deal to happen before that business is settled.’

## CHAPTER XII

SIR GERALD had been fairly warned of the consequences of any association with John O'Neill. Lord Clonfert's tone when the Nationalist leader was mentioned, O'Hara's occasional hints, and O'Neill's own blunt statement ought to have prepared him for what would happen. Yet the reception of the story of Mr. Godfrey's resignation came on him as a surprise.

He found himself suddenly in the position of a stranger of very doubtful reputation among the people he had begun to make friends with. The smaller local gentry, who had welcomed him at first as at least a social acquisition, became shy of him. He detected a difference even in the manner of the bank-manager, though the desire not to offend a wealthy customer kept his feelings within certain bounds.

There was a double reason for the strong hostility of the upper classes. Mr. Godfrey was well known and personally liked by everyone. He was an old and valued friend of many. His dismissal—for no one spoke of it as a resignation—was resented as an act of

high-handed injustice. Behind this personal feeling lay the impenetrable mass of prejudice against national sentiment of any kind, which is as strong as religious faith in a certain class of Irish people. Indeed, it is in reality stronger. Sir Gerald would have been easily excused if he had appeared publicly in a state of intoxication. He would have been forgiven ultimately for a series of immoralities. Even an accusation of dishonesty would not have excluded him from what is called society. Such sins are forgiven every day to men who are true to the traditions of their class. The one unforgivable person is the political renegade, the gentleman who has friendly dealings with the Nationalists. The strength of the prejudice has something noble in it. It is the protest of a class which is being driven against the wall, against what appears to be base desertion to the ranks of a conquering majority.

Sir Gerald was at first simply bewildered by the change in his social position. He tried, as long as O'Hara was with him, to laugh at the snubs he received. As soon as the editor left him he began to feel his loneliness acutely. Even his own servants appeared to perform their duties with a certain air of protest. His visits to Clonfert Castle were most unsatisfactory. His position as Hester's future husband had been distinctly and gladly recognised before the trouble with Mr. Godfrey, but the moment that story became public property he found a change in his reception. Lord Clonfert was obviously nervous

and uncomfortable in his company. He talked incessantly on uninteresting topics, and fenced off Sir Gerald's half-hearted attempts to bring things to some kind of explanation. Lady Clonfert was frigidly polite, but extremely distant in her manner. She ignored Sir Gerald's attempts to get back on to the old footing of familiarity. She decisively refused an invitation to inspect some improvements in Clogher House. When he asked to see Hester, he was told that she had left home in order to pay a long-promised visit to an aunt in England. Sir Gerald was perfectly well aware that no such visit had been in contemplation, and resented what seemed like hustling the girl out of his reach. He gave up any direct attempt to arrive at an understanding of his position, and ceased to visit Clonfert Castle. He devised a plan of using Canon Johnston as an intermediary, and called on the clergyman for the purpose of opening negotiations. The attempt was a complete failure. The Canon was so obviously ill at ease during the visit that Sir Gerald was glad to get out of the rectory.

After awhile his first bewilderment gave way to a feeling of annoyance. His total inability to explain his position to anyone irritated him. He began to think that, since he was condemned unheard, he might as well do something to justify his sentence. He called again upon John O'Neill, and asked his advice about the appointment of a successor to Mr. Godfrey. A series of consultations followed.

Sir Gerald was agreeably surprised at the readiness with which O'Neill threw himself into the task of finding the right kind of man.

'You see,' said O'Neill, 'the position is almost unprecedented. You want your estate managed in the interests of two parties who for a long time past have regarded each other as natural enemies. You want to secure your own rights, and at the same time to help your tenants to live. Now, it seems to me perfectly hopeless to get a trained land-agent. The traditions of his profession would be too strong for him. He could not possibly do anything but oppose you. In the same way, any political friend of mine, however good a business man he might be, would be equally hopeless. I could only recommend a man who has been fighting against your class for years, and is fully convinced that the sooner landlordism is done with the better for Ireland. You wouldn't trust such a man, and I don't blame you. He would not be trustworthy.'

In the end the services of a Mr. McNeece were secured. He was a young man, an Ulster Scot, a junior partner in a firm of chartered accountants. There were certain drawbacks to his appointment. He knew absolutely nothing about land. It became necessary at once to employ a land-surveyor for the division of the grazing-lands. At the same time there were some definite advantages about Mr. McNeece. He approached his new work with a perfectly open mind. He was fettered with no prejudices against

methods which had acquired a certain political colouring. He neither distrusted one man because he was a Nationalist, nor had confidence in another because he had been loyal through the 'bad times.' He had no idea of regarding himself as a kind of satrap dealing out, so far as possible, rewards and punishments. For him the estate was a business concern, and he the financial manager.

Unfortunately for Sir Gerald, he was quite hopeless as a companion. His keen Northern accent acted like an acid, withering the incipient shoots of conversation. He had no interests in common with his employer, nor did he conceive himself to have any personal relationship with Sir Gerald. Even his politics were too hopelessly remote to admit of discussion. He might have been at home among English Radicals of the Nonconformist type. In Connaught his theories were as absurd as if they had reference to a society in some other planet. Sir Gerald received a succession of mild shocks as he discovered that his agent was a fanatical teetotaler, an anti-vaccinationist, and the secretary of an anti-tobacco league. After that he gave up trying to make a friend of him. It was clearly impossible to ask a man to dinner who scowled at a claret-jug, and lectured on heart disease when a cigarette was offered him. In the office McNeece was delightful. He grasped the principle of O'Neill's scheme at once, and set to work vigorously on the details.

It was quite natural that the consultations with

O'Neill which preceded Mr. McNeece's arrival should continue, as points in the carrying out of the scheme required discussion. Sir Gerald got into the habit of going to see O'Neill two or three times every week. After awhile he was introduced to Mrs. O'Neill, and his visits gradually ceased to have even the excuse of business. He found it pleasanter, as the autumn evenings shortened, to sit chatting over a cup of tea in the O'Neills' drawing-room than to yawn himself weary in the great library of Clogher House. O'Neill's strength of character and directness of purpose began to exercise a fascination on the young man. At first it seemed to him that Mrs. O'Neill was a mere cipher in the household, a sweet and gentle shadow of her husband. Gradually he discovered in her, too, a reserve of strength—less obtrusive than her husband's, less boisterous in its expression, but at times easily seen. O'Neill himself treated her opinions with deference when she expressed them. More than once he apologized, in obedience to her looks rather than her words, for some peculiarly outrageous paradox.

Sir Gerald passed through three stages in becoming her friend. At first he ignored her. Next he rather feared her as someone whose mental habits were strange to him. Finally he revered her, as one whom it was wise to lean upon and trust. After awhile he came to be uncertain whether he was more attracted by O'Neill's militant boldness and force, or his wife's sympathy and quiet strength.

At first O'Neill avoided politics in the long talks that the three had together. It was not possible for him to do so for very long; for politics, or rather Irish politics, were the only subject which really interested him. His life centred in the struggle which the Irish were making in the House of Commons. His mind was continually at work on the possibilities of bullying or cajoling one or other of the English parties. Everything was subordinated to the desire of obtaining a practically independent Irish Parliament. The Land Question, which seemed to bulk so large in Irish life, he regarded as of only second-rate importance. He used it as a means of keeping up the enthusiasm of the mass of the Irish voters. It proved, too, a good way of weakening, and finally destroying, the landlord class, whom he regarded as irredeemably loyal to the English connection. Imperial politics only interested him in so far as they afforded occasional opportunities for embarrassing the Government which happened to be in power. For the rights or wrongs of the petty wars which flared up at intervals along the borders of the Empire he cared absolutely nothing. He assumed as a working hypothesis that England was invariably in the wrong. He expressed a deep contempt for that whole region of domestic politics in which philanthropy and socialistic speculation try to find legislative expression. The working man he described as a 'fatted fraud.' The whole machinery of national education, from board schools to free libraries,

was 'an attempt to teach pigs to talk instead of grunt.'

He believed that a really united Ireland would be able to force any measure of independence from England.

'I have almost got what I want,' he said one day. 'The landlord party in a few years will be impotent outside the House of Lords, and unpopular there. The Protestant farmers in the North are coming round to us. Their members are either afraid to move or very insecure in their seats. The success of the land movement is making itself felt. The Ulster Protestant makes a lot of noise with drums, and calls it loyalty, but he is really just as anxious as anybody else to get his rent reduced.'

The view which he got of O'Neill's political schemes was intensely interesting and exciting to Sir Gerald.

'Ah!' he said once, 'it must be a grand thing to be playing a great game like that, with Irish independence as the prize. I wish I was in it with you.'

'Do you?' said O'Neill, looking at him curiously. 'Don't be too sure. There is another side to the picture, a behind-the-scenes view of the play that you have not seen yet. I have Ireland at my back to-day, but I can't keep it. There is a power in Ireland greater than mine. In the end the Roman Church will beat me. I may hold out long enough to snatch a Parliament for Ireland out of the fire, but if I don't

do it at once I shan't do it at all. They can beat me in the end.'

'I don't love the priests,' said Sir Gerald; 'I was not brought up to love them. It was the priests who betrayed my father. But for them, he might have made a fight for it.'

'I think,' said O'Neill, 'that they mean to wreck me now if they can. You see, things are very critical. The Government can hardly weather this storm about the foreign Religious Orders without the help of my eighty votes. They have bought the priests already, and they are prepared to bid a little extra to make sure of me. The priest's price is cash down, grants for colleges, schools, universities, and so forth. The Government are pledged to pay it. They will offer me another Land Act, but it won't do. My price is an Irish Parliament. If the Government won't promise it—and I don't see how they can—the Opposition will. My game is to wreck the Government.'

'Are you sure of your men?' asked Mrs. O'Neill.

'I'm as sure as I can be of a set of men half of whom still believe that a priest can send them to hell if he likes. The real tug will come at the General Election. The best of my men may be beaten at the poll if the priests throw themselves into the struggle.'

'And then?' asked Sir Gerald.

'Then! Oh, then there will be no Irish Party strong enough to do anything. We shall have another half-century of concessions to what are supposed to be

Irish demands, and at the end of that time you will have a spectacle unique in Europe—a country which exists solely for the purpose of supporting and enriching a Church.’

‘And all that is to happen,’ said Mrs. O’Neill, smiling, ‘just because you are left out in the cold. No wonder people call you arrogant! Do you think you are the only man in the world who can help Ireland?’

‘I know I am. You see,’ he went on, turning to Sir Gerald, ‘the kind of thing a man is driven into saying when his wife takes to sneering at him. By the way, Sir Gerald, I never congratulated you on your engagement. I hear Miss Carew is charming. When is the wedding to be?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Sir Gerald, and something in his tone caught Mrs. O’Neill’s attention.

‘I hope,’ she said, ‘that nothing has gone wrong. Perhaps I ought not to speak about it.’

‘I don’t mind telling you in the least. The fact is, I don’t know where I stand. It was all right until that business of Godfrey’s resignation, but ever since then they have been as cold as ice to me—Lord and Lady Clonfert, I mean: Hester herself is away.’

‘Have you written to her or heard from her?’ asked Mrs. O’Neill.

‘No. I don’t know where she is, and in any case I should not like to write in the face of her mother’s evident opposition.’

‘What nonsense!’ said O’Neill. ‘Find out at once where she is, and write to her, or, better still, go to her.’

‘I am not sure that I should be justified in forcing her in that sort of way.’

‘Justified!’ said O’Neill. ‘Man alive! what do you mean? Of course you are justified in getting her if she will go with you.’

‘I have a feeling,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘that it would not be honourable to chase her behind her mother’s back.’

‘I don’t in the least agree with you,’ said O’Neill. ‘What do you suppose is honour? It is the reflex action of the prejudices of our birth and education. Look here: I cross my legs and hit my knee—so. My foot jumps. That’s because I am a tissue of nerves inside, which react to a certain stimulus quite apart from my will. You’d call me a fool if I made a fetish of my foot and let my actions be guided by its jumping more or less. A man’s mind is just like his body. It is woven through with prejudices. They come to us by inheritance and education. Something excites one of them, and there comes a jump, like the jump of my foot. You call it a feeling of honour, and refrain from doing something you want to do because of it. I call a man a superstitious fool who lets himself be hampered in any such way.’

‘Now,’ said his wife, ‘you are talking nonsense, and wicked nonsense, too.’

‘Well,’ said O’Neill, ‘do you talk righteous nonsense;

but don't, for goodness' sake, begin to talk conventional sense. You must remember that you are a woman who has lost the right of talking sense on this subject. Do you know, Sir Gerald, that my wife is a woman of fortune, and that I have been living on her ever since we were married? She picked me up, I may say, out of the gutter. If she talks what is called sense to me now about marriage, I'll be forced to think that she is sorry for marrying me.'

Mrs. O'Neill ignored this speech altogether.

'I don't understand,' she said, 'what you men mean by honour in these things. I should call it most dishonourable to leave an unfortunate girl in a state of uncertainty about your feelings because you are afraid of what her father will say about you.'

'But what can I do? She has gone away, and I don't know where she is.'

'I suppose,' said Mrs. O'Neill, 'she won't stay away for ever. As soon as ever she comes home you ought to see her. You must not let your whole life, and, what is worse, her life, be soured for the sake of drawing-room manners.'

'Quite so,' said O'Neill. 'You say the mother is cold to you. See whether the girl is. If she isn't, it does not seem to me to matter if the old woman hangs icicles round your neck.'

'Remember,' said Mrs. O'Neill, 'your first duty is to Miss Carew. It's wicked to let your sense of honour become an excuse for torturing her.'

'That's just what I said, only better expressed,'

said O'Neill; 'but when I said it you called it wicked nonsense.'

'It's quite different. You advised him to do what you both thought was dishonourable. I advise him to do what we all three know to be right.'

## CHAPTER XIII

SIR GERALD made up his mind to follow Mrs. O'Neill's advice. Fortune favoured him, for he met Hester Carew outside his own demesne gate on the very day of her return home. She was driving her own pony out from the station. She flushed when she saw him, and it seemed as if she meant to drive past. Sir Gerald held up his hand and stopped her.

‘Hester,’ he said, ‘I want to speak to you.’

She got out of the trap and stood beside him.

‘Wait where you are,’ he said to the groom, who had gone to the pony’s head. ‘Miss Carew will be back in a few minutes.’

He took her hand, and led her, without speaking, through the gates and along the drive under the lime-trees.

‘I want to ask you,’ he said at last, ‘if you will be my wife.’

‘How can you ask such a thing?’ she said. ‘Did I not answer you once before?’

A great feeling of relief came over him. He no longer had any real doubt that she meant to be true

to him. Yet, because his experience had left him somewhat bitter, he went on :

‘It was different then. Then I was a gentleman. Do you know what I am now? I am a friend of John O’Neill’s. I believe in him and in his politics. I’m not fit now to associate with respectable people.’

‘I told you once,’ she said, ‘that I loved you. Do you think it makes any matter to me who your friends are? Besides, I told you that I loved Ireland. Do you think that I would give you up because you are going to work for her? Oh, Gerald, if it were possible, I would love you all the more for that!’

For some time they wandered on, still hand in hand. They left the road without noticing what they did, and now their feet brushed through the tattered leaves that covered the ground.

‘But your father and mother, Hester?’

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘they will be angry.’

‘They are angry already,’ he said, ‘and they don’t know half my wickedness.’ He could afford to smile now at the recollection of his last reception at Clonfert Castle. ‘They only know about Mr. Godfrey’s resignation. What will they think when they hear that I have gone over to the enemy altogether?’

‘It will be most unpleasant,’ said Hester—‘in fact, it will be terrible. You see, mother always said you must be shown your mistake. She said that if we were firm you would come to understand how badly you had behaved. Nothing more was to be said

about our engagement until you had shown that you were sorry.'

'I see. I was to be suitably punished until I turned into a repentant prodigal son. Then she would have got out the best robe and put it on me, and prepared a fatted wedding-cake. Unfortunately, the parable does not work out in my case. My deadliest offence is that I am arising and going back to my father. It is "father," you know, and not "prospective mother-in-law," in the original.'

'I don't know what on earth will happen,' said Hester, 'but I don't care. I know what I mean to do, whatever they say. But oh, Gerald, why did you leave me so long without a word from you? I thought—no, I never thought you did not love me; but I thought you were afraid.'

'So I was, just afraid,' said Sir Gerald. 'Now you know the worst of it. I was frightened of a silly shadow, but I know better now.'

Again they walked on together in silence. Suddenly Sir Gerald stopped, took her hand, and faced her.

'Hester, we have got to do something. We have got to make things clear to your father and mother.'

'Yes,' she said doubtfully, 'I suppose we must. I rather dread it, though. You know even father feels strongly about John O'Neill. Still, we might talk him over after awhile. But mother——'

Her pause was eloquent.

‘There’s no use funking,’ said he. ‘It’s better to go at it straight while our courage is hot.’

‘But mine isn’t the least hot. It is very cold indeed, what there is of it, and there’s not much.’

‘I propose that you drive me out with you now,’ said he.

‘Oh, Gerald, must we? Couldn’t you write a letter or something?’

‘That would only make things worse. Far better have it out face to face. I shall ask to see Lord Clonfert on business, and go into the library.’

‘How nice! And I suppose I shall be settling it with mother in the meantime. Now, suppose I ask to see Lord Clonfert on business, and you go up to the drawing-room and explain things to mother till I have finished. How would that do?’

‘I’ll tell you what we’ll do,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘You drive me up to the turn to the stables. I’ll go straight to the house. You can watch them groom the pony, and come up when it is all over.’

‘I don’t see,’ said Hester, ‘why I should not drive straight home now. You can get out one of your own horses and follow me. That will give me time to get out of the way before you arrive. I shall not say anything beforehand to spoil your fun.’

‘But, Hester, I haven’t seen you for so long, and I should like the drive with you. Nothing but having you beside me will keep my courage up to boiling-point.’

‘Now don’t get silly! This is serious business.’

In the end he got his way, and drove beside her in the pony-trap.

Lord Clonfert was at home, and greeted Sir Gerald in the library fussily and nervously.

‘I am delighted to see you,’ he said as he shook hands; ‘but don’t let us stay here. The fire is wretched, and you must be cold after your drive. There’s quite a nip of autumn in the air, isn’t there? Lady Clonfert is sure to have a good fire in the drawing-room. She is expecting Hester home to-day. Come up there.’

By this time he had made his way back to the door, and stood holding it open for Sir Gerald.

‘But I want to talk to you, and not Lady Clonfert. It is about Hester that I want to speak.’

‘Oh, well,’ said Lord Clonfert, ‘that’s all the more reason for joining Lady Clonfert. Isn’t it? She’s Hester’s mother, you know.’

Sir Gerald resigned himself to the inevitable.

They found Lady Clonfert sitting beside the promised fire with a book on her lap. She was evidently surprised, and not very well pleased, at seeing Sir Gerald. Lord Clonfert performed a sort of ceremony of introduction :

‘This is Sir Gerald. He wants to speak to us about Hester. I brought him up here. It seemed to me that he ought to see you as well as me.’

Lady Clonfert bowed coldly and severely. Sir Gerald braced himself for the effort of making a plunge into his subject. The interview promised to be decidedly unpleasant. Apparently Lord Clonfert

felt this, too, for he made a desperate effort to escape.

‘I have just mentioned to Sir Gerald that we are expecting Hester home this afternoon. Perhaps I had better go and look out for her. It might be unpleasant—I mean awkward—if she was to walk in suddenly. You see, Sir Gerald wants to talk about her.’

‘I don’t see the least necessity for you to go,’ said Lady Clonfert. ‘I shall tell Phillips to inform her that we are engaged.’

She rang the bell as she spoke. There was an interval of almost unbroken silence before the arrival of the butler. Lord Clonfert made a gallant attempt at conversation, expressing wonder that Hester was so late. Neither of the others responded to him. Sir Gerald could not, because he knew exactly what had happened to Hester. Lady Clonfert would not, because she meant to make things as difficult for Sir Gerald as she could. At length the butler received his message for Hester, and retired. Sir Gerald felt that the moment for the struggle had arrived. He plunged at once into the middle of the business, and made straight for his main point.

‘I want to explain myself,’ he said, ‘and make my position perfectly clear. When I was staying with you a few weeks ago, I had no strong political opinions of any kind. Since then I have come to see things clearly. I have decided to attach myself to Mr. John O’Neill, and to become a member of his party. I

want to know whether you are still prepared to accept me as a husband for your daughter.'

'My dear Sir Gerald,' said Lord Clonfert, 'you are surely exaggerating. It's very natural that you should wish to guard against any possibility of misunderstanding; it is most creditable to you. But you can't really mean that you intend to turn Nationalist.'

'This,' said Lady Clonfert, 'is very much what I expected to hear.'

'Nonsense!' said Lord Clonfert. 'I mean to say, we didn't expect to hear anything of the sort. Of course, we knew that you had consulted that scoundrel—that is to say, had asked John O'Neill's advice about something connected with the estate—and that Mr. Godfrey had resigned the agency. I'm bound to say I don't see how he could have done anything else. But we never thought—— Surely you don't mean to say you're going to be a Nationalist M.P.?'

'If I'm wanted,' said Sir Gerald, 'and if any constituency elects me, I shall certainly go into Parliament.'

'We cannot,' said Lady Clonfert, 'allow our daughter to form such a connection.'

'No,' said Lord Clonfert, 'we really can't. You must see yourself that the thing is impossible. I'm exceedingly sorry, Sir Gerald. I like you personally, and in many ways the marriage is just what I would desire. Surely you can't intend to go on with this political'—he meant to say 'fad,' but at the last moment feebly substituted 'idea.'

‘I am very sorry, too,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I hate to give you pain, but I cannot alter my convictions. You know, Lord Clonfert’—he saw the uselessness of making this appeal to Lady Clonfert—‘that a man must do in these things as his conscience bids him.’

It was Lady Clonfert who answered him.

‘No man’s conscience can lead him to associate with thieves and murderers.’

Sir Gerald choked down with difficulty the anger which her unreasonable and insulting answer roused in him. It was some time before he trusted himself to speak again.

‘Have you considered,’ he said at last, ‘the effect of your decision on Hester? I hope it is not vanity in me to say so, but I believe she really loves me.’

‘Hester,’ said Lady Clonfert, ‘will live to thank me for saving her from the degradation you propose for her.’

‘I shall make one more appeal to you, Lady Clonfert,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘Are you prepared to put Hester, and yourself too, in an utterly false position before the world by refusing your consent? For I warn you fairly: if we can’t get your consent, we shall marry without it.’

‘I think,’ said Lady Clonfert, ‘that Hester will act in accordance with my wishes.’

‘You are wrong. I saw Hester to-day, and talked the matter over with her.’

‘I shall see Hester this evening,’ said Lady Clonfert, ‘and I am certain that she will obey me.’

‘Lady Clonfert, be wise. Don’t drive us to do what both we and you must always regret. You know that we must get our own way in the end.’

Lady Clonfert deliberately turned her back on him.

‘Come,’ said Lord Clonfert, ‘there is no use talking in this kind of way. Say good-bye to Lady Clonfert. I’ll see you down to the door myself.’

As they passed the library the old man opened the door with a hand that trembled visibly.

‘Come in here,’ he said. ‘Now sit down and let us talk reasonably. There’s no use your defying Lady Clonfert. You’ll never get the better of her in that way. And you ought to feel for her—you ought indeed. Hester is her only daughter, and after all, you know, the thing is a disgrace. I don’t want to say anything to hurt your feelings, but you don’t know these Nationalists as well as I do. Of course, I know how young men feel about patriotism, and all that sort of thing, especially when they haven’t lived in the country. I know Hester has ideas of that sort, too. I used to have them myself when I was at Oxford. I wrote a poem about Ireland one time, and an article which one of the Dublin papers published, about the “fiery Celtic temperament” and the “cold and calculating Saxon.” I pitched it very strong. It relieved my feelings at the time. There’s no earthly harm in that sort of thing.’

He looked at Sir Gerald with a sort of wistful hopefulness. He believed that if only Sir Gerald's enthusiasm could be directed into a harmless channel, the trouble that lay before them might be averted, after all.

'Or look here,' he said: 'there's what they call the Gaelic revival. I don't know much about it myself, but I believe they do plays and things in Dublin. It's tremendously patriotic. They are reviving the Irish language and the ancient national costume. They translate the old poetry about Finn and those people. Suppose you ask down Dennis Browne. He's in the thick of it, I believe. You could have a play all in Irish, or what they call a Féis, at Clogher House. You might send an invitation to Mr. O'Neill. I think Lady Clonfert would rather like it. She could have photographs taken, and pictures of the performance in the illustrated papers afterwards. The whole town would come, and we would all wear green poplin ties and woolly suits of clothes.'

Sir Gerald smiled faintly, in spite of himself.

'I'm afraid it is no use. You see, I met Dennis Browne once, and — well, he's a bit above my head.'

'Couldn't we get up lectures in the town-hall on Irish history? You could work up Patrick Sarsfield and Owen Roe O'Neill, pitch into Oliver Cromwell, and do the perfidy of England over the treaty of Limerick thoroughly. I'd go and take the chair, if

you liked, or we might get Father Fahy. It would be most useful. There's nothing Irish people are so ignorant about as the history of their own country.'

'It's no use,' said Sir Gerald. 'You know yourself that that kind of thing is only talk. You wouldn't want me to do it if you thought there was any reality in it.'

Lord Clonfert pondered for a minute or two. Then he said:

'You know Pat O'Dowd, don't you?—the publican down at the harbour. Anyhow, you know who he is. He's a most interesting man. He was one of the Fenian leaders. The police have been watching him ever since, more or less. They say he has some sort of secret society about him still—a few of the old physical force party, and some young men, too. I don't want to know anything about that myself, of course; but I can quite understand that it might be most interesting to you. I can tell you what it is: if you really want to hear home truths about the Parliamentary party, it's to men like Pat O'Dowd you ought to go.'

'Lord Clonfert,' said Sir Gerald, 'is there any use in talking to me in this way? Won't you see that my mind is made up?'

The old man gave a sort of groan.

'Well,' said Sir Gerald, 'at least you'll do the best you can for Hester. Don't let things be made harder for her than they need be.'

‘ Then, you really will join those blackguards ?’

‘ I must,’ said Sir Gerald.

‘ And you’ll drag my daughter down into the mud with you ? May God forgive you, for I think you’ll break my heart !’

## CHAPTER XIV

It gradually became clear, even to Lady Clonfert, that she had no power to stop her daughter's marriage. After two or three very painful interviews with Hester, she gave up the attempt, and adopted a policy of silent protest. She never alluded to the subject at all, and talked to her daughter as if no such person as Sir Gerald existed and no marriage of any kind was in contemplation. Hester felt that the ceremony had better be got over as soon as possible. She persuaded her father to promise to be present, and fixed a day not more than a month after her return home. Even her hurried efforts to obtain something like a lady's proper outfit of clothes for the occasion failed to awaken any sign of interest in Lady Clonfert. She ignored the bulky parcels which came and went continually, and took no notice of Hester's departure or return when she went up to Dublin to visit certain dressmakers.

On a misty morning early in October the marriage took place in the gray church which stood just outside the wall of Lord Clonfert's demesne. Of the little party who were present, Hester was by far the most

self-possessed. The old clergyman who had baptized her and taught her her Catechism was tremulous, and almost tearful. He had lived for years in awe of Lady Clonfert, and it was a terrifying experience to find himself acting in direct opposition to her wishes. He distrusted Sir Gerald, whom he hardly knew; and his real affection for Hester left him undecided as to whether he was doing her good or evil in marrying her to the man she had chosen.

Sir Gerald was nervous and irritable. Even the presence of Lord Clonfert did not save him from feeling that he had placed Hester in a false position. It seemed to him entirely wrong that she should have to steal through her wedding as if it were something to be ashamed of. Lord Clonfert tried to be cheerful, and even attempted a joke with Sir Gerald when they met in the porch. It was a lamentable failure, and before the service was over he had relapsed into a condition of visible misery. The only other person present was Mr. McNeece, who was fidgety and obtrusive. His attention was divided between the extreme discomfort of a new frock-coat, imported from Belfast for the occasion, and a desire to behave properly as his patron's best man.

After the ceremony the whole party went to Clonfert Castle for luncheon. The meal was far from being a festive one. Lady Clonfert's assumption of not knowing what had happened in the morning rendered conversation almost impossible. It was a relief to everyone when Mr. McNeece plucked up his

courage and gave a short lecture on the wickedness of vaccination. Even Lady Clonfert was grateful to him, and received his disquisition in a way which led him to speak of her afterwards as a most intelligent woman.

Sir Gerald and his bride departed nearly an hour sooner than was necessary to catch their train. They agreed to spend at least three months abroad, for a long absence from Clogher seemed to offer the best chance of effecting even a show of reconciliation with Lady Clonfert.

In the meanwhile local politics in Clogher were developing confusedly. Father Fahy was very well inclined to carry out his Bishop's advice. His defeat at the hands of John O'Neill rankled in his mind, and since revenge on the Parliamentary leader seemed for the present beyond his power, he determined to annoy Sir Gerald. No feeling of personal dignity ever interfered with Father Fahy's actions. Indeed, no Roman priest ought to have any sense of personal dignity. The dignity of his office he will maintain when it suits him, but he must achieve the end he has in view, even at the cost of humiliation for himself and his office. Father Fahy was so well trained in the traditions of his order that he had no hesitation in retaining his position as vice-president of the League whose members had knocked him down and trampled on him. It was not long before he regained his old power. An Irishman will occasionally bully and abuse his priest, but he is always repentant after-

wards. The enemies of the Roman Church in Ireland have frequently congratulated themselves on the signs of a popular rebellion against priestly authority. Hitherto their rejoicings have proved to be premature. The very men who are most violently anxious to break loose from clerical bondage turn out, when the first frenzy of rebellion is past, quite as eager to re-fasten their own fetters.

The first object of Father Fahy's attack was the new agent. Mr. McNeece was before all things a business man. He had no idea at all of paying over money from the estate without understanding very clearly where the money went. He incurred the wrath of an influential local contractor by refusing to pay his account until certain items in it were explained. The explanation resulted in the deduction of certain shillings here and there, and a total loss to the contractor of something over a pound. This was bad enough, and the contractor did not fail to lay a highly-coloured account of the transaction before his fellow-Leaguers.

Things became much worse when Mr. McNeece declined to pay over the customary half-yearly subscription to Father Fahy's local charities without being told what the charities were. The priest informed him that it was altogether impossible to render accounts of money given to the Church. Mr. McNeece was astonished, but firm in his demands. He pointed out that it was impossible for him to hand over a considerable sum of money to

anyone, priest or layman, without being told what it was to be spent on. He disclaimed any wish on his own part or Sir Gerald's to control the expenditure. An account of some sort, however, he must and would have.

Father Fahy was in a difficult position. The financial arrangements of the Church of Rome in Ireland had recently been subjected to some severe criticism, and Father Fahy was unwilling to put a weapon into the hand of the enemy by openly refusing to put his name to the foot of a balance-sheet. At the same time it was a matter of actual principle with him, as it is with every other Irish priest, not to render accounts of any sort. Under the circumstances, the obvious thing to do was to draw a red herring across the scent by denouncing Mr. McNeece.

At the next meeting of the League the injured contractor brought forward a resolution protesting against the appointment of an Orangeman as agent on the estate. Father Fahy, who was chairman on the occasion, advised the meeting to pass the resolution unanimously.

'The Catholics of Clogher,' he said, 'are willing, and even anxious, to live at peace with their Protestant neighbours; but we are not prepared to allow our faith to be insulted and our convictions outraged by a total stranger, a member of an organization vowed to the extermination of Catholicism.'

Mr. McNeece, as a rigid Presbyterian, detested

Orangemen almost as cordially as Father Fahy himself. Indeed, he did so with much better reason. Father Fahy had never been in the North, and would probably not have recognised the tune of 'The Protestant Boys' if it had been played under his window. Mr. McNeece had had his one and only political speech spoiled by the braying of an Orange band outside the hall in which he was engaged in describing to the Presbyterian Association the slight which the Viceregal Court put upon the Moderator of their Assembly. He was, naturally, extremely angry when he read in the local paper an account of Father Fahy's speech. He wrote to the editor at once, denying that he was a member of the obnoxious organization.

Father Fahy summoned a special meeting of the League, at which Mr. McNeece's letter was considered. Two resolutions were passed. The first congratulated Mr. McNeece on having resigned the offices he held in the Orange Society, at the suggestion of the League. The second declared that his action in no way exonerated Sir Gerald from the blame of having appointed him.

Mr. McNeece, in private, used some strong language when he realized the interpretation which had been put upon his letter. He replied again, stating emphatically that he had never in his life been an Orangeman, and requesting an apology from the secretary of the League.

Father Fahy and the contractor were greatly

pleased. They found themselves in a fair way to make the agent odious and ridiculous. The other members of the League were agreeably excited. At the next meeting no resolution was passed, but *The Connaught News* published a leading article on the subject.

‘We cannot,’ so the article concluded, ‘feel anything but contempt for a man who is ashamed of his principles and convictions. That any man should be an Orangeman seems to us deplorable; but for the honest and fearless Orangeman we have a certain respect. He is a foeman worthy of our steel. We cannot but despise the man who shouts for King William among the rowdies of Ulster, and denies having done so when he finds himself in a minority in Connaught.’

This was very well; but Father Fahy was disappointed at the effect of the resolutions on Sir Gerald. The people generally were still inclined to speak well of their new landlord, and it seemed impossible to draw him into the controversy.

The fact was that Sir Gerald was all the while so occupied with his approaching marriage that he had no attention to spare for Father Fahy. He felt, too, that his alliance with John O'Neill placed him beyond the reach of the League's pleasantries. It was unfortunate, from the priest's point of view, that the striping of the grazing-land was going on rapidly and satisfactorily.

A rough map of the new farms was hanging in the

estate office shortly after Sir Gerald's marriage, and, in spite of all that had been said about Mr. McNeece, the people went to consult him quite openly on market-days. The rumour that Sir Gerald had offered his services to John O'Neill as a member of the Parliamentary Party still further disquieted Father Fahy. At first it seemed to him quite incredible, but it reached him from so many different sources that he was forced to believe it. He decided to have another interview with his Bishop. He had really nothing very definite to say when he arrived at the Bishop's house. He stammered in his tale, and got confused. It seemed, however, that the Bishop understood him at last.

'You seem to think,' he said, 'that the people are likely to accept the guidance of John O'Neill and Sir Gerald Geoghegan in preference to yours.'

'Yes,' said the priest, 'that is what it comes to.'

'I'm sorry to hear it,' said the Bishop. 'You see, the Bishops feel pretty confident now that John O'Neill intends to vote against the Government on the question of the Religious Orders. The Church is pledged to support the Government and to secure the Irish votes. If John O'Neill carries the party with him, he will inflict a severe blow on our prestige. If after the General Election he comes in again at the head of the Irish Party, there will be no doubt about his position. He will be the leader of an anti-clerical party.'

'I suppose so,' said the priest. 'There are a great

many of our own people who would gladly join such a party if they got a good lead.'

'If such a thing should occur,' said the Bishop, 'it would be a bad day for us. Anti-clerical political parties all begin in the same way. They profess to be sincerely religious, and to desire nothing but a reasonable limitation of priestly power. They all end in the same thing—a wave of infidelity, and subsequent immorality.'

'I have always thought that Protestants as political leaders were most undesirable and dangerous. They are sure to be jealous of our power over the people.'

'May God forgive us if we think too much about our power! We are not fighting for it; we are fighting for the faith and souls of our people.'

The solemnity of the old man's tone touched the priest.

'What can I do?' he asked. 'I am willing to be a martyr for the holy faith, but how can I keep my people from slipping away from me to follow blind guides?'

'Pray, my son—pray. What are you a priest for except to pray? Every time you offer the adorable Sacrifice pray for the souls of your people and the faith of Ireland. Weary yourself, body, soul, and spirit. What does your weariness matter if your prayer is heard?'

The priest rose from his chair and knelt before the Bishop.

‘Give me your blessing,’ he said, ‘that I may pray.’

The hands were laid on his head, and the familiar Latin fell upon his ears. He knelt quite still long after the Bishop ceased to speak. There stole over him a profound peace, and with it a sense of strength. The world seemed to be very far away from him. He was among the realities of eternity. Words and phrases which had long ceased to be anything but formal to him crowded back into his mind charged with the meanings they had once had for him. He was uplifted from himself, as he had been on the day when he had said his first Mass. At length he rose.

‘I have been,’ he said slowly, ‘with God, and with the Mother of God, and with the blessed Saints.’ He crossed himself, and added: ‘Oh, Holy Mary, pray for me.’

The Bishop looked at him, saw the strange light in his eyes, and knew that he spoke sincerely. Very slowly, with his eyes still fixed on the priest, the old man rose from his seat. His hands trembled as he grasped the arms of the chair to raise himself. He seemed suddenly to have grown very old indeed.

‘My son,’ he said, ‘I knelt to you for your first benediction on the day I made you priest. You remember that, do you not? It is a beautiful custom, that of kneeling to the newly ordained, while the Spirit the Bishop’s hands have given dwells in a soul as yet free from all sin. I see that the

Spirit rests in you in the same way again now. Therefore now, as then, I kneel to you for your blessing.'

The younger man turned away.

'I cannot. I dare not. I am but a sinner.'

'But you must,' said the Bishop. 'Will you deprive my soul of grace?'

Men have denounced the Irish priests for tyranny and greed and lust of power. Every one of these charges has been, and is to-day, miserably true. Yet, behind the money-getting and the scheming there is something else. It is very strange that the man who could take the bribe which Mr. Godfrey offered him, who could play fast and loose with truth and justice to render Mr. McNeece odious, was capable of high and pure religious emotion. Perhaps there is some strange twist in the Celtic nature which renders such contradictions possible. Perhaps there is a Divine power in the priestly office and the duty of prayer and sacrifice laid upon the priest which keeps the man, in spite of himself, within reach of the kingdom of heaven.

The great world which is neither Celtic nor Catholic can only wonder at what it sees. For, however to be explained, the facts are plain enough. The Irish priests have schemed and lied, have blustered and bullied, have levied taxes beyond belief upon the poorest of the poor; but they have taught the people a religion which penetrates their lives, and which, in its essential features, is not far from

the Spirit of Christ. Such religion is not to be taught by words. The man who imparts it must first understand it and possess it in his own soul. This is the most wonderful puzzle in Irish life. Some who try to understand Ireland see the priests and what they do. Then they curse Ireland and despair of her, or hope only that her people will some day cease to be Catholics. Others see the people, and love them for their goodness. They shut their eyes to all the evils of the pervading priestcraft. None of them see Ireland whole or understand her. It remains for someone, a prophet, to see the good and the evil, to know where each comes from and to divide them the one from the other.

## CHAPTER XV

WHEN Sir Gerald and Lady Geoghegan returned from their long honeymoon shortly after Christmas, life at once became extremely interesting to them. Someone—it is always difficult to trace a great movement to its source—had started a famine in the West of Ireland. English philanthropists, and afterwards the English press, took the matter up warmly. Funds were started for the relief of the starving peasantry, and well-to-do people, especially in Lancashire, subscribed largely. As a matter of fact, the peasants in certain parts of Connaught are always so poor as to be on the verge of actual hunger. Some winters things are a little worse than usual. Then, if circumstances are otherwise favourable, there is a sensation, and relief on a large scale is attempted by the charitable.

Sir Gerald found himself a member of the local committee for the distribution of Indian meal and potatoes. He also discovered, to his surprise, that he was an object of considerable interest to the representatives of various newspapers and to inquisitive philanthropists on tour. He owed his fame

to the discovery, by an intelligent reporter, of the plan for dealing with the grazing-lands on his estate. He was posed before the public of Manchester and Liverpool as an enlightened landlord.

Both positions had their disadvantages. It is disagreeable, on returning from a walk or a drive, to find your door besieged by beggars. Sir Gerald's first experience of this part of the work laid upon members of relief committees bewildered him. There were about fifty people, mostly women, congregated on the gravel in front of his doorstep. Hester was ministering tea and bread to them, assisted by Jameson, who evidently disliked the task. At Sir Gerald's approach the whole crowd hastened to surround him.

'Your honour will get me a stone of potatoes from the committee,' clamoured an old crone, clinging to his coat-sleeve. 'I'm the widow Macanally.'

'Will you not let the gentleman be!' said another. 'Bad luck to you with your pushing and crowding!'

'Your honour, I'm Antony Henaghan Tom,' cried an old man. 'There's never a one has the need of the relief like myself.'

'Is it you needing the relief?' said a young woman with a baby in her arms. 'Don't be listening to him, your honour. Sure, haven't I the long weak family, and every one of them a colleen and no good at all to earn, and myself with never a thing to put on me but an old shawl and a petticoat, saving your honour's presence?'

‘Musha, and it’s true for her, the creature!’ said a chorus of sympathizers.

‘I’m the widow Geraghty,’ broke in another. ‘And it’s hardly ever I got this far itself with the hunger that is on me. I’d be bet up this minute only for the sup of tea her ladyship gave me. The blessing of God and the Holy Virgin be on her for that same.’

‘My cow died on me ere yesterday,’ said another. ‘The childer is starved for the want of a drop of milk.’

‘The rain is coming in through the roof of my little houseen, your honour, and my bed’s destroyed on me.’

‘I’m a lone orphan woman that’s after burying my husband and six as fine boys as ever you seen. Don’t heed her talking. Hasn’t she a boy to work for her?’

‘And if I have itself, it’s a bad head he is to me.’

‘Faith, and that’s true,’ put in another. ‘He’s a foolish poor man, and every penny he gets goes on the drink.’

Sir Gerald struggled through the crowd to Hester.

‘What are we to do?’ he asked.

‘I don’t know,’ she said; ‘I have no more bread in the house.’

‘I beg your pardon, Sir Gerald,’ said Jameson respectfully, ‘but don’t be giving money to them.’

The half of them is just impostors, and the rest is not in want of much.'

'Listen to me,' said Sir Gerald, loud enough to be heard above the clamour. 'I have no relief to give you here. I'll make a list of your names and where you live, and bring it before the committee at the next meeting.'

There was a chorus of gratitude:

'The blessing of God on your honour!' 'That you may be alive and well this day twenty years!' 'Long life to yourself and her ladyship!' 'Miss Hester, God bless her! was always a good one for the poor!' 'Sure, he's a grand man entirely you've got, Miss Hester, glory be to God!'

Making a list of names sounds an easy thing, but Sir Gerald found that in this case there were certain difficulties.

'My name is Bridget Deveren, your honour, but my husband's name was Maillia.'

'Put her down as Mrs. O'Malley,' said Hester.

'But she says her name is Deveren.'

'And so it is,' said the woman. 'But, sure, her ladyship knows best, and its Mrs. Maillia that they'd call me at the committee.'

'James Heraty Pat!' repeated Sir Gerald after an old man. 'Do you mean James Patrick Heraty?'

'I do not, your honour. Sure, Jamsey Pat Heraty is my brother's son, and not myself at all.'

'Is Pat your surname, then?'

Again Hester rescued him.

‘Put down just what he says, Gerald; I’ll explain it to you afterwards.’

While he was completing his list, Sir Gerald observed, with surprise and some annoyance, a young man who was walking round the group and taking photographs with a hand camera from different points of view. As soon as the last name was taken down, he approached the stranger, intending to express his feelings plainly.

‘Are you aware, sir, that these are private grounds?’

The stranger blandly presented his card.

‘I presume,’ he said, ‘that I am addressing Sir Gerald Geoghegan. I came into your grounds with the intention of calling upon you. My name, as you will see, is Dixon—Septimus Dixon, spelled with an *x*. I represent *The Morning Observer*. I am making a tour of Connaught, and am doing a series of articles on the famine-stricken peasantry.’

‘I have the strongest objection to being photographed,’ said Sir Gerald.

‘The photographs are not intended for publication,’ said Mr. Dixon, regarding Sir Gerald with an engaging smile. ‘May I ask you a few questions? It would deeply interest our readers to have before them a landlord’s view of the situation. Especially, if you will allow me to say so, that of a landlord who has shown a sincere interest in the welfare of his people.’

‘I suppose,’ said Sir Gerald ungraciously, ‘that you had better come into the house.’

Mr. Dixon followed his victim into the library. He produced a note-book, and propounded a long series of questions. He wanted to know the exact price of potatoes in the market, the hygienic value of home-made flannel as an article of clothing, the facilities which existed for the transport of mackerel to London, the possible earnings of a woman who spent her days in knitting socks. Four times Sir Gerald was obliged to confess his inability to satisfy this craving for detailed information. On each occasion Mr. Dixon made a note. Sir Gerald felt that he was losing his reputation, and was not likely, after all, to figure in *The Morning Observer* as an enlightened landlord.

‘I understand,’ said Mr. Dixon, ‘that you have devised an entirely new scheme for the management of your estate. May I ask for a few details?’

Sir Gerald denied that he was a reformer on a large scale, but gave an outline of O'Neill's scheme for dealing with the grazing-lands. Mr. Dixon seemed disappointed.

‘Your agent, Mr. McNeece,’ he said, ‘told me all that this morning. Is there nothing further?’

‘What on earth did you expect?’ asked Sir Gerald. ‘Did you think I had started a communistic brotherhood?’

‘Well, not exactly that. I thought—— But

never mind. Perhaps you will favour me with your private views on the land question in general, and the value of the Roman Catholic priesthood as a social force.'

'Really,' said Sir Gerald, who was beginning to be amused, 'if I am to give you a précis of all my views on everything Irish, you are likely to spend a week in listening to me.'

Mr. Dixon made another note.

'One more question I should like to ask,' he said, 'and I need scarcely say that I shall treat your answer as confidential. In fact'—he closed the note-book as he spoke, and restored it to his breast-pocket—'I ask this question entirely for my own satisfaction. Is there any famine at all? This is a point on which I find the greatest difficulty in obtaining reliable information.'

Almost every day for a week or two someone called to interview him on the subject of the famine or his own new farms. He learned to get rid of newspaper men comparatively easily. They all asked the same questions, and Canon Johnston taught him the plan of keeping a series of answers jotted down and ready for use. It was only occasionally that one of them broke fresh ground and asked some startlingly idiotic question, which necessitated an unprepared answer.

A much more difficult class to deal with were the gentlemen who had plans for the commercial regeneration of Ireland. There was a man who tried hard to

convince everyone he met that a few thousand pounds invested in knitting-machines would enable everyone to live in plenty. The machines were to be distributed among the cottagers, and an instructress was to be hired to explain their use. It turned out afterwards that this man was an agent for an English firm who manufactured knitting-machines, and that he also acted privately as a middle-man in the stocking trade. Another gentleman came armed with large lumps of charcoal, which he had made, so he assured Sir Gerald, from turf by a patent process. All he required was a lease, on easy terms, of a few hundred acres of bog, and sufficient capital to buy the necessary plant. He talked convincingly of certain by-products, of which he produced specimens in bottles. These alone were to pay the whole cost of working, and the fortunate shareholders would gather in the enormous profits of the sale of charcoal. Another had a delightful scheme for making tooth-powder, toilet-powder, and a drug which would supersede iodoform, out of turf ashes. Every cottage fire, as he very truly pointed out, produces annually an enormous quantity of turf ash. At present it goes entirely to waste, and might be obtained at little more than the cost of collection. Properly treated and retailed after suitable advertisement, it would realize a handsome sum. Turf ashes—this gentleman had experimented, and therefore knew—possess valuable antiseptic properties.

The philanthropists were even worse than the

speculators. They appeared upon the scene in considerable numbers, and, being usually men of a certain social position and of quite unimpeachable motives, had to be treated with some forbearance, so far as forbearance was humanly possible. Three members of this class called on Sir Gerald one evening after dinner. They introduced each other. One was a retired military man—a Colonel. Another was a Professor—it did not appear of what art or science. The third was a lady of uncertain age. She did not seem to be either the wife or the daughter, but may have been the niece, of one of the gentlemen. All three came from Manchester. They had primed themselves beforehand with what seemed to be scraps from the perorations of speeches delivered to a charitable English public. They came ostensibly for information, but were so intent upon discharging their platitudes at Sir Gerald that they forgot to allow him to speak.

Father Fahy had taken them during the afternoon to visit a cabin on the shores of the bay. Sir Gerald knew the house well. It was one which was regularly used to produce the necessary impression on English visitors. Its owner, an obliging man with a sense of humour, entered into the spirit of the exhibitions. He was always to be found seated on a low stool before the smouldering ashes of a turf fire. His clothes were picturesquely ragged. His trousers hung in a kind of fringe over his bare feet. If he got reasonable notice of a proposed visit, he borrowed

an impressive number of half-clad children from his neighbours. The Colonel made a sketch of the scene. The lady had expended a whole spool of Kodak films in obtaining photographs. All three were loud in their appreciation of what they had been shown.

On the whole, Sir Gerald enjoyed his experience of a famine greatly. Old Lord Clonfert was a constant visitor at Clogher House, and was prepared to enjoy to the full the fuss that was being made. It was, he explained, the eighth famine which he recollected, and every one of them had added to the gaiety of life. He was thankful that Lady Clonfert was paying a visit to her brother in England.

‘You know, Hester,’ he said, ‘your dear mother is a little inclined to take these things too seriously. Of course, being English, she must not be blamed for that. She would certainly want to be up and doing, and it is so much nicer to sit still and watch other people.’

Sir Gerald and Hester were also glad that Lady Clonfert was away from home. She could not have been expected to ignore the circumstances of their marriage. Her sense of dramatic fitness would have demanded a full-dress reconciliation. Neither of them liked the prospect, and there was still the friendship with O'Neill in the background, unre-nounced. Lord Clonfert asked no questions, and, so long as he was not called on to meet the Nationalist leader face to face, could be relied on to avoid the difficult subject. Hester herself rapidly made friends

with Mrs. O'Neill, and entered into most of her schemes of charity. For O'Neill himself she developed a kind of timid hero-worship. His caustic contempt for the charitable endeavours of the English philanthropists never seemed to include the quiet almsgiving of his wife. He never did more than protest laughingly against their extravagance. Sometimes he drove them on their more distant expeditions, for they were not content to relieve only the poverty which clamoured at their doors.

## CHAPTER XVI

ONE day Sir Gerald met Dennis Browne in the street of Clogher. He did not at first recognise the poet, who had arrayed himself in a violently-coloured tweed suit and a pair of very shiny yellow leggings.

‘I don’t wonder at your not knowing me,’ said Browne, glancing at his own clothes. ‘I assure you they are most uncomfortable. I thought I ought to wear something of the sort. It seemed to be expected of me when I thought of coming down here. Do you think it would matter if I didn’t do it any more? I should like so much to return to the garb of civilized mankind.’

‘What on earth brings you down here?’ asked Sir Gerald.

‘Didn’t I tell you?’ said Browne. ‘I have a little property down here, and a quite dilapidated house. They told me my people were the most famine-stricken of all. I came down at once. I had never seen a famine.’

‘Well,’ said Sir Gerald, smiling, ‘what do you think of it?’

‘Oh,’ said Browne, ‘I find it charming. The feet

and legs of the younger women are delightful. I regard it as a special dispensation of Providence that they are too poor to buy shoes and stockings. I met a girl to-day fit to be a model. She was striding across a beautiful brown bog with a basket of turf on her back. Her figure had all the freedom of a boy's. It would be a sacrilege to put a pair of corsets on her. They tell me, though, that even the peasant girls wear them on Sundays, also boots and stockings and long skirts. I have not been here yet for a Sunday. If I am I shall stay indoors. I could not bear it. I imagine that they could only buy the cheapest makes. Some of the steels would be certain to have broken, and I should see them sticking up in little lumps under their shoulder-blades.'

'But what about the famine?' asked Sir Gerald. 'Have you formed any opinions about it? We talk of nothing else down here, you know.'

'I don't wonder. I am suffering from it myself acutely. I brought down a quantity of tinned provisions with me from the Stores, but I never realized before how very bad such things are at the best. Of course, there is a housekeeper who says she cooks, but I have not ventured to try her. I looked into the kitchen. She appeared to possess a frying-pan and a strange utensil which she called a "pot-oven." No, I couldn't venture. It might have been worse than the tinned pâtés.'

'I don't wonder that you have definite views about the famine. Would you like me to give you a relief

ticket? You could exchange it for a stone of Indian meal, and make porridge.'

'I'm not a professional mendicant, but I confess that I should be grateful for a dinner. I hear you are married. Do you think Lady Geoghegan would give me food?'

'Of course. We shall be delighted to see you. Come over and stop with us as long as you remain in the West.'

'Thank you. This is hospitality worthy of the unsophisticated savage. I had heard of such among very primitive peoples, but never hoped to meet it. I am sure Lady Geoghegan will be charming. Will she mind if I relapse into my natural trousers again in the morning? I won't stay with you beyond luncheon-time to-morrow. I have sent for my cook from Dublin, and told her to bring the necessary implements of her craft in a packing-case.'

'By the way,' said Sir Gerald, struck by a sudden recollection, 'perhaps you had better not come until to-morrow. We are expecting O'Neill and his wife to dine with us to-night.'

'Does he dislike me greatly?' asked Browne. 'Could I not overcome his prejudice if I exerted myself and became really charming?'

'Oh, I don't think *he* is likely to mind,' said Sir Gerald. 'What I was thinking of was that perhaps you might object to meeting him. I find that very many people do. He is the leader of the Nationalist Party, you know.'

‘There is no one in the world whom I object to meet. I am sure I shall enjoy Mr. O’Neill. Will he make a speech? I haven’t heard a political speech for years.’

Early in the afternoon John O’Neill arrived at Clogher House, bringing with him a stranger. This was Sir John Harrison, an Englishman, who was just then enjoying a well-earned fame and a recently bestowed K.C.B. He had attracted public notice by doing something to the river Nile which rendered its waters more available for irrigation than they were meant to be by Nature. He had further distinguished himself by persuading certain tribes who lived inland from the Gold Coast to accept the advantages of a British protectorate. On his return home from this latter exploit he had written a book, and illustrated it with beautiful pictures of savages. The work cost two guineas, and achieved an immense success.

‘I consider myself fortunate,’ he said, ‘in having this opportunity of discussing the Irish problem with three men who must be regarded as representative Irishmen.’

Sir Gerald murmured a suitable civility.

‘I have been deeply impressed,’ began Sir John, ‘during my stay in Ireland with two facts—first, the immense interest people take in religion; and, secondly, the commercial stagnation. I’m sure, Mr. O’Neill, that these facts have struck a careful observer like you.’

‘I’m not much of an observer,’ said O’Neill, ‘but what you mention has more or less forced itself on my attention.’

‘You haven’t mentioned the stones,’ said Browne, ‘the gray stones that lie on the fields all over Connaught. I am convinced that they have a significance.’

Sir John seemed a little puzzled.

‘There certainly are stones,’ he said; ‘I don’t think I ever saw so many stones anywhere. But I don’t quite see what you mean by their significance.’

‘When the Creator,’ said Browne, ‘was riddling out the earth over Europe, He used to empty the sieve on to Connaught.’

He spoke as if he were uttering a profound truth whose bearing on the subject in hand would be immediately obvious. O’Neill chuckled softly. Sir John paused and considered the remark. Apparently he came to the conclusion that it was beyond him, for he went on:

‘Now, it seems to me that what Ireland wants is less religion and more trade. For instance, instead of commemorating St. Patrick, you ought to have a public holiday in honour of the Guinness family.’

‘Should we be obliged to drink stout that day?’ asked Browne. ‘One ought to work out the details of a reform of the kind beforehand. Stout is very severe on the liver.’

‘Have you made your suggestion to any of the clergy?’ asked O’Neill.

‘Oh yes; I called on both Father Fahy and Canon Johnston this morning.’

‘How did they take it?’ asked Sir Gerald with interest.

‘I was disappointed,’ admitted Sir John. ‘But you know, gentlemen, what the theological temper is like. There is a great deal of prejudice in every ecclesiastic. If I were to differentiate between them, I should say that Father Fahy was the more unwilling to give up St. Patrick and Canon Johnston had the stronger objection to the substitution of Guinness.’

‘Perhaps you didn’t know that the Canon is a strong advocate of total abstinence,’ said Sir Gerald.

‘Dear me! Now, perhaps if I had said Harland and Wolff instead of Guinness it would have been all right.’

‘Try him,’ said O’Neill. ‘There’s nothing like trying.’

Dennis Browne seemed to have lost interest in the conversation since the significance of his stones was ignored. He stood by the window fingering a cigarette.

‘It is a great pleasure,’ went on Sir John, ‘to talk to men like you, who are free from religious prejudice. If only all Ireland could be hypnotized for a fortnight, and every religious impression removed

from the minds of the people, she might at once become a prosperous and contented portion of the United Kingdom.'

'Have you any other suggestions to make?' asked O'Neill a little grimly.

'It has occurred to me,' said Sir John, 'that Achill Island might be turned into a kind of immense zoological gardens. Wild animals could be imported—not, of course, the larger carnivora—and allowed to roam at large among its mountain slopes. I cannot suppose that the inhabitants would object, if they were compensated for the damage done to their property. I know no place more suitable for an imitation of the ancient Eastern *paradeisos*.'

'I have heard,' said Browne from the window, 'that the climate is particularly suited to wild asses.'

'Really,' said Sir John. 'Now, I have seen the wild ass——'

Sir Gerald was moved by an impulse of pity to interpose.

'Would the Kings of England hunt in your new paradise, Sir John, after the fashion of the Persian monarchs?'

John O'Neill's temper was apparently beginning to give way. He closed the discussion of the prospects of Achill with an abrupt, 'Anything else?'

'I should think,' went on Sir John, unabashed, 'that a tunnel under St. George's Channel would be of immense service to Ireland. Regular land communication with England would wean your people

from their insularity. I am convinced that, if once Irishmen could be taught to regard themselves as English in the same sense as, for instance, a Lancashire man is English, a great change would take place in the relations of the two countries.'

'That seems probable enough,' said Sir Gerald.

'It is very gratifying to hear you say so,' replied Sir John. 'Now, Mr. O'Neill, tell me candidly what you think of my views. They are, of course, necessarily somewhat crude, but what do you think of them?'

'I should not like to say all that I think. It might be awkward for you if I did. But I will say this: Of all the intelligent foreigners——'

'Don't say foreigners,' pleaded Sir John.

'Well, of all the intelligent Englishmen that I have ever heard speak about Ireland, you are quite the most intelligently English.'

Sir John pondered this saying. It seemed to strike him as enigmatic and not wholly satisfactory. He shortly afterwards took his leave.

'Did you ever,' said O'Neill when he was gone, 'listen to such an utterly damned idiot?'

'Your language,' said Browne softly from the window, 'would certainly outrage my cook. I am so glad she is not here. She has called in a policeman for less than that. On the whole, though, you express my feeling. He lit a cigarette, and quoted:

' "A fool, a fool, I met a fool in the forest;  
As I do live by bread, I am a fool." '

‘I should like,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘to have heard the interview with the priest and the parson.’

At dinner that evening Browne devoted himself to the task of entertaining Lady Geoghegan. He chose in the first instance to talk about cookery. It was a subject in which he was himself deeply interested, and it seemed likely to be within the range of a woman’s understanding. He described at some length a method of cooking the fins of dogfish and serving them with a kind of black sauce. He related some anecdotes of a chef with whom he had been intimate in Paris. John O’Neill, who sat on the other side of his hostess, became gradually disgusted with Browne’s serious earnestness about food. He made an effort to divert the conversation.

‘Sir Gerald tells me,’ he said, when Browne came to a pause, ‘that he bought some pictures when he was abroad. I haven’t seen them yet. I suppose you have hardly had time to unpack them?’

‘I must show them to you,’ said Hester. ‘They are all stacked in the gallery. Perhaps you would like to see them to-morrow. Do you care for pictures, Mr. Browne?’

‘I am probably the only real judge of art at present in the British Isles,’ said Browne. ‘I wish Sir Gerald had consulted me before buying anything. The mistakes which really intelligent and well-intentioned people make in these matters astonish me. There is a print hanging in my bedroom here, Lady Geoghegan, which I was obliged to veil with my bath-towel. I

don't blame you for its being there. I don't blame Sir Gerald, either. It probably represents the taste of his uncle. It shows Britannia, a plump lady, in a low-necked dress, giving a Bible to a kneeling Indian. A gentleman in a white waistcoat, representing the respectable English middle class, stands behind her. His face betrays the satisfaction of a righteous man who sees a good deed done. Just picture the scene to yourself, Mr. O'Neill: A stout, middle-aged woman in a low-necked dress presents a copy of the Sacred Scriptures, Authorized Version, to the representatives of the ancient wisdom of the East.'

'You shall have another bath-towel,' said Hester, laughing. 'I'm glad you mentioned it.'

'No fat woman,' said Browne, 'ought ever to wear a low-necked dress. There ought to be some law against it. The thing is disgusting and indecent.'

'Hence, I suppose, the bath-towel,' said O'Neill.

Browne apparently wearied of his efforts to amuse Lady Geoghegan, and set himself to obtain amusement at her expense. Taking the objectionable low-necked dress as a starting-point, he entered upon a disquisition about women's clothes. He displayed a knowledge of the subject which at first surprised, and then rather disgusted, Lady Geoghegan. He by no means confined his remarks to such parts of a lady's attire as are meant to be visible to the public eye. He watched the growing discomfort of his hostess with evident pleasure. O'Neill fumed impotently. It was perfectly impossible to stop the man, nor was it

easy to say at what exact point he became objectionable. He passed by an easy transition from the frills of a fashionable lady's petticoats to the purple flannel of the Mayo peasant girls. His description of the charm of their costume involved him in an appreciation of the girl whom he had seen carrying turf. He began with her feet, gave his impressions of her ankles, and was proceeding to illustrate with a dessert-knife on the table-cloth the curve of the calf of her leg, when Lady Geoghegan seized a chance of withdrawing.

'I hope,' said Browne, with a satisfied smile, 'that I have not outraged Lady Geoghegan's sense of propriety.'

O'Neill looked him up and down slowly.

'You've made,' he said deliberately, 'the most disgusting attempt I've ever come across at a most objectionable form of cleverness.'

Sir Gerald interposed hurriedly. He felt angry with O'Neill. He had not heard the provocation, and the remark struck him as an unmannerly attack upon a fellow-guest.

'I was reading the other day, Mr. Browne, an article of yours upon a portrait of a young girl in the Dresden Gallery. Tell me, why do you say that the whole interest of the picture centres in the light which falls upon the child's shoes?'

Browne seemed quite unmoved by O'Neill's attack upon him. He replied:

'It seems to me that the attention of the critic

must inevitably be drawn to that ray of light and its exquisite reflection from the satin shoe. The play of light upon a fabric like satin has been very imperfectly appreciated even by the greatest artists. Where it is dealt with truly, the eye is caught and held by it. In the case you mention I found it impossible to feel anything except the splendid technique in the handling of the child's shoes.'

'I should have imagined, from your conversation,' said O'Neill, 'that *your* attention would have been fixed on the frills of her drawers. But perhaps these weren't visible. I haven't seen the picture myself.'

Browne flushed slightly; otherwise he seemed to resent O'Neill's insult far less than Sir Gerald did. It was he who broke the awkward silence by suggesting that they might carry their coffee into the drawing-room and ask Lady Geoghegan to sing to them.

Hester complained to her husband afterwards about Dennis Browne's conversation.

'He is the most objectionable man I ever met,' she said. 'He took a delight in tormenting me at dinner.'

'What did he say?' said Sir Gerald.

'It wasn't anything he said. It was what I was always afraid he was just going to say. Indeed, it wasn't quite that, either. It was because I felt that I ought not to be thinking of what he was going to say. Remember, Gerald, if he is to stay

here, I simply won't stop in the room alone with him.'

'I wish I'd heard him. Of course, I was talking to Mrs. O'Neill all through dinner.'

'I wish you had; but I dare say you wouldn't have understood how bad it was for me, even if you had heard it.'

'O'Neill seemed to understand.'

'Did he?' said Hester, flushing. 'What did he say?'

'He snubbed Browne after you and Mrs. O'Neill had gone. He was what I should call savagely rude. He couldn't have been worse if Browne had been the Chief Secretary for Ireland.'

'I'm glad,' said Hester. 'I hope he'll do it again.'

'I'm bound to say Browne didn't seem to mind. I should have shied a decanter at a man who talked that way to me.'

## CHAPTER XVII

THE sensation which the famine created began to subside, and visitors from England became rarer. Those who were not really poor ceased to clamour for doles of Indian corn. Sir Gerald began to think over the meaning of what he had seen of the real condition of the people. Most of the members of the relief committee had got tired of their work, and he sometimes found himself alone with Father Fahy at the meetings in the court-house.

He was surprised to discover how entirely honest the priest was in the work of distribution. Other members of the committee, shop-keepers or elected members of local boards, had pressed the claims of their customers or constituents. For Father Fahy poverty, and only poverty, constituted a claim for relief. Sir Gerald began to feel drawn to the man. There was no mistaking his genuine sympathy with the almost hopeless poverty of a section of his parishioners. They had many long talks together, and Sir Gerald came to see that, whatever unreality there might be about the periodical cries of famine,

the normal poverty of the people was appalling, and quite indisputable.

It came on him as a revelation that there were families on his estate who could afford to buy no food except Indian meal for a portion of every year. He was horrified at the thought that these people paid him rent. He spoke to Hester about his feelings, but these things appealed less strongly to her imagination than to his. She was sorry for the people, and ready to help them if she could ; but she had grown up with such facts before her eyes. He consulted John O'Neill, and received in return a lecture on the economic problems which lay before an Irish Parliament, when such a thing existed. For the present, poverty must be regarded as one of the deplorable results of English government, and inevitable until that great cause of all evil ceased to exist. The priest alone seemed able to enter into Sir Gerald's feelings. Unfortunately, Father Fahy's suggestions threw him back on his grazing-lands and the new farms—the problem which he thought O'Neill had comfortably solved for him.

'What the people want,' the priest said to him again and again, 'is more land. They are willing and able to support themselves, but they must have land.'

Sir Gerald knew very well that the plan for distributing his land was carefully calculated to exclude the very people to whom the acquisition of more land was the first necessity of all. It is likely that he

would have yielded to Father Fahy, and attempted to settle the very poorest of his tenants on the new farms, if a rapid development of the political situation had not broken for a time his friendship with the priest. Indeed, the general slackening of interest in the famine, no doubt in any case inevitable, was hastened by the ripening of what promised to be an exciting crisis.

It is curious to notice how events which take place in very distant places, and as the result of purely local conditions, often affect the history of peoples who have nothing whatever to do with them, and make or spoil the lives of individuals in no way connected with any country except their own.

That a Continental Government should enforce certain oppressive laws against the members of Religious Orders would seem a thing sufficiently remote from Irish politics. Yet, through the working of complicated connecting causes, the attack upon the French monks and nuns changed the course of Irish agitation, closed the career of a great Irish leader, and altered the life, among others, of an obscure Irish country gentleman.

Acute minds among the clergy and the politicians had long foreseen that a struggle between O'Neill and the Church was inevitable. It had become apparent, as we have seen, that the contest was imminent, and that its immediate occasion was likely to be found in the English policy about the foreign Orders. The monks, when the laws of their own country became

intolerable, fled to England. This in itself would have been unimportant, and hardly interesting, but the English Nonconformist ministers seized upon it as an opportunity for the half-political, half-religious oratory in which they rejoice. The almost blameless administration of a popular Government had long condemned these men to an impotent silence, and they joyfully broke out into a cry that England was being made Catholic without knowing it. Their congregations, previously blasé and apathetic, were galvanized into vitality. Public meetings were got up during the summer, and the Government was called upon to enforce certain obsolete laws against the Jesuits and others. The newspapers devoted leading articles to the subject. Irresponsible members of the Opposition, hoping for the best, took up the cry. During the early part of the autumn there was a by-election in Mickleham, a town with a strong Nonconformist electorate. Some enthusiast started the idea of registering the names of Protestants who were prepared to suffer imprisonment rather than allow the Jesuits to overrun England. He called his register the 'Golden Hero Roll.' The title sounded well, and, as it was quite impossible for anyone to be imprisoned whatever came of the controversy, Protestants sent in their names by thousands. The leaders of the Opposition began to think that something might be made of the agitation, and flung themselves into the struggle. Nonconformist ministers of inferior calibre succeeded in making the general

confusion worse by mixing up the English Ritualists with the Jesuits. The electors of Mickleham were bewildered, but enthusiastic. They returned a 'Golden Hero' by an immense majority.

The Nonconformists were jubilant, and the agitation gathered force. Certain supporters of the Government who sat for particularly Protestant constituencies were threatened. The 'Golden Hero Roll' was flourished in their faces. They finally agreed to support the Opposition in compelling the Government to deal with —by this time no one knew exactly whether it was the Jesuits, the Ritualists, or the Pope himself, who was to be dealt with. One thing only was quite clear: the British Lion was roused, and roared exceedingly. Certainly he meant to eat someone, and the Government began to feel that they were likely to be the victims. Cabinet Ministers returning from their holidays met each other with anxious faces. In September it would have been possible to talk sense and be listened to. In November something might still have been done. By the end of December it was quite impossible to reason with anybody. No one knew better than the Prime Minister how quickly the agitation would subside, if only the next session could be tided over. He looked round for help. It occurred to him that Ireland was Roman Catholic. Clearly, it was Ireland's duty to support the Government in the emergency.

There was an awkwardness about approaching the Irish Party. The Government had allowed itself to

be cajoled by certain great Anglo-Irish lords into suspending the ordinary criminal law, and imprisoning ten Irish members of Parliament under the provisions of an arbitrary Crimes Act. The Right Honourable Mr. Chesney represented to the Cabinet the extreme difficulty of negotiating with John O'Neill while his followers were dribbling back to him one by one from their various prisons. The Cabinet recognised the difficulty the more readily as they were aware that John O'Neill was not likely to be bought with anything short of a Home Rule Bill, and the Anglo-Irish lords would not hear of such a thing.

It remained possible to negotiate with the Roman Catholic Bishops. They and their priests were always supposed to possess unlimited power in Ireland. This was their opportunity for using it to good purpose. The Bishops, on their side, owned to wanting something from the Government. The Prime Minister was in a yielding mood. He was prepared to concede anything so long as he was not obliged to proclaim from the house-tops that he was supporting Roman Catholicism. The Bishops hinted at a University, Mr. Chesney demurred.

‘At some future time,’ he said, ‘I shall be delighted to press your most reasonable demand; but at present—you really must consider the very excited state of English public opinion.’

There was, however, a question about the payment for children in industrial schools. There was the possibility of securing a Government subsidy for a

great teaching Order. There were grants in contemplation for technical education which might be guided into the treasury of the Church. Mr. Chesney hinted at pleasant things. The Bishops appeared to be satisfied. The Government felt easier, for with the help of a solid phalanx of Irish votes they could afford to laugh at the Opposition, 'Golden Heroes' and all. There was only one point still doubtful. Would John O'Neill be guided by the Bishops? Nobody knew, and nobody seemed able to find out. If the worst came to the worst, could John O'Neill's followers be detached, and induced to support the Government? Nobody knew this, either, but the Bishops determined to try.

It was at this stage of the drama that Sir Gerald returned home and picked up the thread of events. There was a pause while philanthropists ran riot in the Press over the famine. It seemed at first as if the agitation against the Government was going to fizzle out. O'Neill knew better. He looked anxious and worried, in spite of his enjoyment of Sir John Harrison's conversation. He talked freely to Sir Gerald about the prospects of the future, but was quite determined to keep his intentions secret from the public up to the last possible moment.

'It's for them to make the game,' he said. 'I shall wait for their next move, and see what it is like.'

He had not long to wait. One morning Sir Gerald found him reading an appeal published by an eminent

English Cardinal soliciting the help of the Irish members against the forces of Protestantism and atheism.

‘He’s very sweet to us now,’ said O’Neill. ‘You’d hardly believe that two years ago that very man was intriguing at the Vatican to secure a condemnation of the League. The English Roman Catholics are the worst enemies Ireland has.’

‘Will you publish any reply?’ asked Sir Gerald.

‘No,’ said O’Neill. ‘I shall hold a meeting of my party in Dublin before the opening of Parliament. We shall decide then what our tactics are to be, or, rather, I shall tell the men how they are to vote. He can find out by watching us afterwards what my answer is to his appeal.’

In the course of the next few weeks one after another of the Irish Bishops published his views on the situation. They were absolutely unanimous: the Irish members must support the Government. It was a Church question, and Ireland was a Catholic nation. There was even a striking similarity in the wording of the pronouncements. O’Neill made no public reply. In private he railed against the Bishops’ assumption of a right to control his actions.

‘These priests,’ he said, ‘are so puffed up with English flattery and bloated with English money that they are beginning to think they own Ireland. I am perfectly willing to admit that they helped us in the past—up to a certain point. Latterly they have been got at and bribed. After all, too, the Church is

essentially on the side of conservatism, and I suppose we are more or less revolutionaries.'

Excitement in Ireland rose to fever-heat. The newspapers almost daily demanded from O'Neill a declaration of his policy. Among pious Roman Catholics there were mutterings, which made themselves audible in letters to the Press, generally anonymous. The fitness of having a Protestant leader of an Irish Party was freely canvassed. In the North the Orangemen were joyful, but perplexed. There seemed every prospect of a stand-up fight between O'Neill and the priests. This would be a glorious and quite un hoped-for event. Their joy was only marred by a doubt as to which side ought to command their sympathy. O'Neill was a bitter enemy of their beloved union with England. On the other hand, the priests were priests. One morning a leading clerical paper declared that O'Neill had made up his mind to vote against the Government. It professed to have the news on quite unimpeachable authority. There followed a long article calling upon all Catholic Nationalists to desert their leader and rally round the Church. O'Neill, the writer said, owed his position to the extreme left wing of the Irish Party. He was the hero of the Fenian party, of the physical force men, of the perpetrators of outrages. Unless the country was to be plunged back again into the chaos of crime from which she had so recently emerged, O'Neill's power must be broken, and broken decisively.

John O'Neill himself received the article with a sneer.

'The worst of fighting against priests,' he said, 'is that they are absolutely devoid of any sense of honour. I never met an ecclesiastic yet who hesitated about hitting below the belt if he thought he would gain by it.'

Sir Gerald was anxious about the effect of the article on the country.

'I'm afraid,' he said, 'that it is likely to do you serious injury.'

In the evening of the day on which it appeared, the O'Neills dined at Clogher House. The effect of the article formed almost the only subject of conversation. O'Neill, in spite of his efforts to carry the matter bravely, was evidently despondent at the turn things were taking.

'I always told you,' he said, 'that the priests would fight me and beat me in the end. I didn't think the crisis would have come so soon.'

'Are you sure,' asked Sir Gerald, 'that they will beat you now?'

'I am not certain,' said O'Neill; 'I can't be until after the meeting of the party next week. I told you the meeting was to be next week, didn't I? We shall see then; but I am very doubtful if my men will follow me.'

'I am very doubtful,' said Mrs. O'Neill, 'whether it is wise to make the fight now. You seem to me to be giving them a great advantage over you. They are in

the right at present. The whole English agitation is an absurdity, and, of course, the Government ought to be supported. I mean to say, if I was English I should certainly support it. Wouldn't it be better to wait until you have got the priests in the wrong, and then fight them ?

'It's not a question of right or wrong at all,' said O'Neill ; 'it's a matter of politics.'

'Surely,' said Hester, 'even in politics——' She hesitated. It was not often that she joined in the discussions which she heard, and now what she meant to say seemed to be too bold.

'I know what you mean,' said Mrs. O'Neill. 'It would be all very simple if one had only to find out which side was in the right on any question, and then vote with it. But so many other things come in.'

'But,' said Hester, 'ought you ever to join the side which you know is wrong ?'

'You've got,' said O'Neill, 'to join the side, as you call it, which is likely to give Ireland her independence. Right and wrong have simply nothing to do with the matter.'

'Except this,' said Sir Gerald—'and I think this is what Mrs. O'Neill meant a while ago—that there's a certain advantage in being in the right. You are less likely to be beaten when you have right on your side. I agree with Mrs. O'Neill in thinking it a mistake to fight the priests on this particular question.'

'Well, you're mistaken,' said O'Neill, 'both of you.'

You think I am forcing on the fight: I'm not. I must fight, or else surrender on terms that will leave me the obedient servant of the Church for the rest of my career. Besides, I owe this Government something. What did they want to shut up my men in prison for? They were not hurting anyone.'

'If that's all that's in your mind,' said Mrs. O'Neill quietly, 'you had better give in at once. There's nothing to be got for Ireland by gratifying your desire for revenge on one particular English party.'

'But that's not all. I have a chance now of snatching the great prize, a chance I may never get again. If I can beat this Government, and the Opposition win at the General Election, they will have to give me what I want. I am not fighting the Government, or the priests, or anyone else, for a small thing. I'm fighting for the freedom of Ireland; and I have it in the hollow of my hand, if I win just this one battle.'

'But,' said Sir Gerald, 'what would be the good of an independent Ireland if the priests are to rule it? You said yourself that they would beat you in the end. I think that I would rather be governed by England than Rome.'

'That,' said O'Neill, 'is the miserable mistake which has made Unionists of nine-tenths of the Protestants of Ireland. They are afraid national independence would mean priestly rule. There never was a stupider blunder. The priests might rule an independent Ireland for five years. They would

never guide so much as a County Council after that. What gives the priests their power to-day is the unnatural alliance they made fifty years ago with the forces that are working for freedom and nationality. The confederacy is already breaking up, and can't survive the first independent Irish Parliament. The Church must fall back into its proper place as a great anti-national and tyrannical power.'

'If you're right,' said Sir Gerald, 'things are rather topsy-turvy at present.'

'They are,' said O'Neill. 'I doubt if the world has ever seen a similar situation. Protestants, in spite of their Protestantism, are bent on maintaining an unconstitutional and arbitrary power. Catholics, in the face of every tradition of Catholicism, are making a revolution. The thing is such an obvious absurdity that any man with common-sense ought to be able to see that it can't last.'

'When things disentangle themselves,' said Hester, 'perhaps it will be easier to do simply what is right in politics. It seems to me as if it ought somehow to be possible.'

'My dear lady,' said John O'Neill, 'if I win this battle, then ten years hence, when your husband is governing Ireland, you may talk to him about right and wrong, and if he listens to you this will be a happy country. If I'm beaten, then perhaps when you are an old, old woman you can preach it to your grandson; for if we miss this chance neither we nor our children will see Ireland free. In any case,

there's no use talking about right and wrong to me. My position is that of the primitive savage. A refined morality would be my destruction.'

After the O'Neills left them, Sir Gerald and Hester sat and talked together.

'I wonder, Gerald,' she said, 'whether, after all, Mr. O'Neill's way of working is the best one. Doesn't it seem to you sometimes not to be very noble?'

'I know what you mean,' said Sir Gerald. 'It's what your father and Mr. Godfrey said to me. He is an unscrupulous man. But I don't think that the men who do great things in the world can keep their hands clean.'

'It wasn't the way your father worked. He kept his hands clean, as you call it. Not even his enemies could ever say of him that he did one base or crooked thing.'

'That is true; but, then, you must remember that he failed.'

'Do you think that Mr. O'Neill will succeed?'

'No,' said Sir Gerald, 'I don't. He has a wonderful strength and influence, but I'm afraid that this time he will be beaten.'

'If he is,' said Hester, 'I think it will break his heart.'

## CHAPTER XVIII

JOHN O'NEILL by no means underrated the power of the Church or the influence of the respectable and timid section of the Nationalist Party. Yet he retained a hope that whatever the ultimate issue of the struggle might be, he would succeed in dictating their immediate policy to the present members of his party. Experience confirmed him in his belief that his own power was supreme. Individuals had sometimes kicked against his orders. Sometimes one malcontent or another had resigned his seat in Parliament as a protest against O'Neill's dictatorship. Such revolts had always proved impotent. The rebels had either come back to their allegiance or had disappeared completely from Irish political life. Once or twice there had been something like an organized attempt to break his power, but he had never had any real cause for anxiety. The party contained men of considerable ability, brilliant speakers, good organizers, and bold speculators, but it contained no one who was the equal of John O'Neill in strength of will and tenacity of purpose. Even with a popular audience, his singular capacity for narrowing a controversy to

its really essential point, and keeping attention fixed on that, prevailed over great oratorical displays. No one in his party possessed as O'Neill did the inexplicable power of ruling others. The secret of this power is a mystery, which we only push further back when we speak of it as the result of a great personality.

It was upon his own determination, his own clear-headedness, and, above all, on this personality, that O'Neill relied for victory in the battle that lay before him. He failed to realize that the men whom he had whipped to heel so often in the past could ever succeed in breaking free from his control. It was not until the very morning before the meeting of the party in Dublin that his self-confidence was really shaken. Michael McCarty called on him while he was busy over some notes of his next day's speech. At all times O'Neill was impatient of interruption. Coming from a man like McCarty, and at a moment of strain and anxiety, it was to him simply intolerable. He looked up from his writing with a frown.

'Unless you have something very important to tell me,' he said, 'I wish you would go away. I am uncommonly busy.'

At no previous time would McCarty have ventured to stand his ground after such a reception. On this occasion he seemed to have discovered somewhere in the recesses of his soul a small power of self-assertion.

‘What I want to say is important,’ he answered.

Apparently O’Neill did not believe him, for he pushed back his writing with an impatient sigh. His manner was that of a man who, like St. Paul’s friends at Corinth, ‘suffers fools,’ but is determined not to do so with any appearance of gladness.

‘Go on,’ he said; ‘but for goodness’ sake be as quick as you can.’

McCarty’s new-found courage seemed to be failing him. He began in a tone of apology:

‘I’ve been a member of your party now for more than ten years. I can never tell you how thankful I am to you for taking me up and putting me into Parliament.’

‘You can skip all that,’ said O’Neill. ‘I’ve no doubt your feelings are most creditable, but I don’t want to be told about them now.’

‘I hope,’ said McCarty, ‘that I’ve been of some use to you. I never went against anything you said, or disobeyed any order you gave.’

O’Neill fiddled impatiently with his pen, and drew his papers to him as if he meant to resume his writing.

‘If you want your allowance increased,’ he said, ‘it can’t be done. The funds won’t run to it.’

‘It’s nothing of that sort at all,’ said McCarty. ‘Of course, I couldn’t have gone to Parliament without the allowance. I am a poor man; but I’m satisfied with what I get. I can do well enough.’

He paused, and stood before O’Neill twisting his

fingers together and shifting his weight from one foot to the other. He was like a schoolboy in search of an excuse to save him from an apparently inevitable caning. At last he made a plunge.

‘I’m a Catholic,’ he said, and then stopped again.

‘Bless my soul! Get on,’ said O’Neill. ‘I know well enough you’re a Catholic. You are not thinking of turning Protestant, are you, or becoming a Buddhist or anything eccentric? For goodness’ sake, don’t consult me about your soul. Go to a priest or a mahatma, or someone of that sort.’

McCarty suddenly lost his temper. Like most weak men, he found in passion courage to say things which in cooler moments would have been not only impossible to utter, but almost unthinkable.

‘Curse you and damn you! You treat us as if we were your slaves or your dogs! You bully us and insult us! You—you tyrant!’

He clenched his fists and took a step forward, as if he meant to strike O’Neill. His face glowed and his nostrils dilated. On his temples a pulse throbbed so violently that the skin rose and fell in visible waves above it. O’Neill watched him curiously. He leant back in his chair, and a smile, half of amusement, half of contempt, crept out from the corners of his mouth.

‘Hadn’t you better keep that sort of thing for the House of Commons?’ he said. ‘You could get yourself quite gloriously suspended for less than that. Just think—“Here the honourable member became

quite inaudible, and remained shaking his fist at the Prime Minister until removed by the Serjeant-at-Arms and four policemen." It's rather a pity to waste a scene of this kind on an audience of one, with no reporters present.'

In reality the scene was full of pathos. A man of the world, cool, cynical, and indifferent, lay back in his chair and sneered. A peasant, passionate like a child, humiliated and goaded beyond endurance, furiously conscious of his own impotence, gasped in a fruitless search for words, and shook his fists in the air. Some feeling of pity seemed at last to touch O'Neill. He sat up, and said almost kindly:

'Go on, man. I don't want to insult you. Only do let us get to whatever it is you want to say.'

McCarty's passion vanished suddenly—as suddenly as it had arisen.

'Mr. O'Neill, forgive me for what I said. I didn't mean it.'

'I'll forgive you for any blessed thing you like,' said O'Neill, 'if only you will get to the point.'

McCarty's voice became gentle and pleading.

'Don't tell us to vote against the Government.'

O'Neill stared at him without speaking.

'I can't do it,' McCarty went on, 'and there's more than me that can't. It will break up the party if you try to force us. Indeed it will; and there's some that will be glad enough to see it broken up.'

'I dare say there are,' said O'Neill; 'but surely you are not fools enough to listen to them?'

‘No, no,’ said McCarty. ‘The most of us would rather follow you, but we can’t.’

‘I see. You’ve been got at by your priests. I don’t suppose that it is much use arguing with you, but just remember this : the Government you want to support put you in prison a few months ago. Its followers have hooted us out of the House of Commons. Its officers have refused us the right of addressing our constituents. You said a minute ago that I bullied you. Did I ever bully and insult you as this Government has done?’

‘I know—I know all that,’ said McCarty. ‘I’d vote against them in anything but this. You don’t understand, Mr. O’Neill. You’re a Protestant, and of course we don’t expect you to understand. We *must* support the Government.’

‘How many of you are going to desert me?’

‘I don’t know,’ said McCarty, ‘but I think most of the members. It is all settled. Everybody knows about it except you. Won’t you think about it, sir? Don’t ask us to vote against the Church. We’ll all stand by you in anything else you like, if you will go our way this time.’

‘I won’t go your way,’ said O’Neill. ‘Let your mind be quite clear about that. I’m not going to be tied to the apron-strings of your Bishops. If you like to sell me, you can. I hope you’ll get a better price out of your priests than your own miserable souls.’

McCarty completely broke down.

‘Oh!’ he moaned. ‘Oh! I would have followed

you. I would have gone to the world's end for you. Oh, holy Mary ! but I loved you, and now you're saying that I have sold you.'

'You have sold me,' said O'Neill ; 'but that is nothing. You must understand what you have done. You have sold Ireland. If your priest promised you heaven for doing it, I think that the recollection of your bargain will make heaven itself as bitter to your soul as hell. Now go.'

McCarty went out cowed and trembling. The wet west wind buffeted him as he closed the door behind him. He walked back towards Clogher soaked and miserable. It is not possible to think that it was his religion which had forced him to desert his leader. Men who act religiously find a joy and a strength even when their way is hard. McCarty only moaned over to himself: 'I couldn't do other—I couldn't do other.' It is not possible, either, to call the motive power which drove him superstition. He had not acted out of fear of hell or hope of heaven. Simply an instinct of obedience, his heritage from generations of Roman Catholic peasant fathers, strengthened by a Catholic education in a Catholic atmosphere, had left it impossible for him to set his own will against the voice of his Church. Perhaps such obedience is the highest of all virtues, because it does not bring with it even the reward of spiritual exaltation.

The mere fact of knowing that he was going to be beaten never prevented John O'Neill from fighting his best. For ten years he had been fighting battles in

the House of Commons. In every battle his defeat was a foregone conclusion. He and his followers had been laughed at by the British public. The cartoonists of the papers which Englishmen imagine to be comic had worked his features into various impossible contortions. Gradually the laughter had given way to irritation. The sympathetic artists conceived a being which might have passed for one of Swift's Yahoos, endowed it with O'Neill's face, and, to prevent misunderstanding, labelled it 'The Irish Party.' The irritation was succeeded by a deep and serious hatred. John O'Neill and his followers were cursed freely and frequently by both the great English parties. Special rules were made for defeating their tactics in Parliament. Special laws were passed which enabled official people to put them in prison for making speeches in Ireland. Every man's hand was against them, and their hands were against everything English. Never once had O'Neill's heart failed him. Neither ridicule, invective, nor force turned him from the way he chose to go. Now, even the certainty that the majority of his own followers was against him did not cow him. He went up to Dublin determined to fight his own battle to the last.

The meeting was a private one. Neither reporters nor the general public were allowed to be present. But the members of the party formed by themselves a respectable audience. O'Neill took the chair, and opened the proceedings with a short and lucid sketch of the political situation. The Government, he said,

was doomed unless it received the support of the Irish members. The Opposition had already approached him with an offer of a separate legislative assembly for Ireland. The details of the scheme were as yet unsettled, but he had no doubt that if the Opposition came into office a Bill would be passed which would go some way towards satisfying the Irish people. Under the circumstances, the policy of the Irish Party was perfectly clear. They must secure the defeat of the Government by as large a majority as possible.

A leading member of the party, Daniel O'Rourke, followed O'Neill. O'Rourke had the reputation of being the most brilliant orator of the party. It was clear that on the present occasion he meant to make full use of his powers. His speech was in every way a marked contrast to his chief's. His resonant tones followed O'Neill's like organ music after the jangling of a cracked bell. He elevated, or said he elevated, the question of their policy from the low level of expediency to the bracing tableland of principle. Ireland was a Catholic country. She returned members to Parliament pledged to the defence and advancement of everything Irish, but bound, also, to support the Church. He denied that the two claims could ever come into conflict. The cause of the Church was the cause of Ireland. He closed his speech with a highly poetical appeal to his hearers to reject O'Neill's advice and throw the weight of their votes on to the side of religion and Catholicism.

Long before he had finished speaking, it became evident that the sympathy of the majority was with what he said. One after another the leading members of the party stood up and declared their intention of siding with O'Rourke. No single voice was raised on O'Neill's behalf. More than two hours had been spent in oratory, when O'Neill rose again.

'Let me remind you, gentlemen,' he said, 'that you are only the *representatives* of the Irish people. On a question of such importance, it is only right that we should take the opinion of the people themselves. I propose that the whole matter be laid before a mass meeting of the Dublin Nationalists to-morrow night.'

It was an astute suggestion. The Dublin populace are notoriously impatient of clerical control. It was certain that a meeting such as he proposed would support O'Neill against an alliance of the priests and the English Government. O'Rourke and his friends held a hurried consultation in whispers. To accept O'Neill's proposal meant being hooted from the platform; to reject it would be interpreted as an admission that the country generally was against them. O'Neill looked round the room while he waited for O'Rourke's answer. He noticed a little group of young men who had drawn together apart from the rest of the meeting. They were listening to one of their number, who spoke eagerly in low tones. O'Neill recognised him at once. His name was Patrick O'Dwyer. He was the representative of a small town which was well known to be

a centre of revolutionary ideas, and even of plots for open rebellion. O'Dwyer himself was more than suspected of being a member of a great secret society. For the first time since he entered the room, O'Neill felt a gleam of hope. He saw that he was not to be left to fight his battle entirely alone.

The whispered consultation between O'Rourke and his friends came to an end.

'I think, sir,' he said, 'that your proposal of an appeal to the people is entirely reasonable. It is one which I should be very sorry to oppose. But why should we confine the appeal to the people of Dublin? Would it not be better to organize a series of meetings throughout the country, and let each member lay the matter before his own constituents?'

The meaning of the proposal was plain enough. O'Neill and O'Rourke both knew that, though the question might be freely discussed in Dublin, the country voters would simply follow their priests.

'Mr. O'Rourke's proposal,' said O'Neill, 'although no doubt in itself good, is, unfortunately, not at present practicable. Parliament reassembles the day after to-morrow. We might hold a meeting to-morrow night in Dublin. It is not possible to hold a series of meetings in the country.'

For the first time O'Neill's remarks were greeted with applause. O'Rourke looked round him angrily. He was met with a fixed stare by O'Dwyer, who led the cheers of his little circle of friends. O'Rourke

rose to his feet again. His manner had lost its first note of triumph. His oratory was no longer flamboyant. He spoke suavely, like a shopman who urges the purchase of desirable goods on a willing customer.

‘You will no doubt, sir,’ he said, addressing O’Neill, ‘have read an article which appeared recently in one of our leading daily papers, in which it was stated that you depended for your position of leader on the extreme left wing of our party—that you were, in fact, the representative of the secret societies which unfortunately exist among our people. I regard such a suggestion as entirely unfounded. For my own part, I should require no denial of the charge from you. For the sake of the general public, however, both here and across the Channel, I ask you to make a public disavowal of any sympathy with the revolutionary section of our party. We shall be perfectly willing to meet the mass of the Dublin Nationalists tomorrow’—he turned from O’Neill, and looked at O’Dwyer and his friends—‘if we may announce to them that our leader condemns all secret societies, and will accept no help from men whom I can only call desperately and criminally foolish.’

O’Dwyer sprang to his feet. His face was blazing with excitement.

‘I protest,’ he said, ‘against Mr. O’Rourke’s language and against his sentiments. I am a member of Parliament; but not because I have any faith in constitutional agitation, for I believe, in my heart,

that it is as useless to-day as it has always been. I claim to speak for men in Ireland who are tired of talk, sick to death of windbags like O'Rourke and the cowards who are willing to lick the boots of English statesmen at the bidding of the priests. We have gone to Westminster because we believe in John O'Neill, and are willing to give his policy a chance. We believe that he is a true man, and we are ready to go with him, for a while, even into the foreign Parliament which we hate and despise. You may denounce us, gentlemen, if you like, but we believe that Ireland's ultimate appeal against tyranny must be to the sword. You may denounce us if you like. We care nothing for you or the likes of you; but if you refuse to follow O'Neill, we refuse to follow you. You will have us to reckon with and to fight.'

O'Rourke rose again.

'I refrain,' he said, 'from commenting on the outrageous vanity and egoism of the speech of this quite unknown member of our party. It seems to have been conceived in the vein of the bombastic heroes of the cabbage-garden rebellion of '48. I return to the point, and ask our chairman whether he is willing to give us a public assurance that he is not in sympathy with Mr. O'Dwyer's secret societies and his policy of crime.'

'My own opinion,' said O'Neill, 'of what is called the policy of physical force is obvious. I should not be the leader of a Parliamentary party unless I believed that what Ireland wants can be secured by constitu-

tional means. Until I am convinced that this belief is unfounded, I shall not commit myself to an approval of the last and, as it seems to me, the hopeless appeal to arms. At the same time, I am not prepared to denounce those who think differently. I am not prepared to condemn their societies—for this reason if no other, that I have no wish to help the English in their task of governing Ireland. I am glad that their way should be made hard for them by any persons and by almost any means.'

'Then,' shouted O'Rourke, 'we refuse to allow your appeal to the Dublin mob. Publish our refusal if you like. Make what capital you can out of it. Beat us at the polls if you can. But here we beat you. The Irish Party will support the Government. We shall be loyal to the Church.'

O'Neill looked round him slowly, as he rose once more to his feet. His face was gray, and seemed suddenly to have grown drawn and thin. His hands were trembling. He steadied them by leaning heavily on the table in front of him. Even his voice seemed to have failed him, for his first words were barely audible.

'You have decided to betray me. Will you not think again before it is too late? I do not ask you for my own sake, but for Ireland's. You know that you are betraying Ireland.'

It seemed as if he was going to break down altogether. His eyes wandered in search of sympathetic faces among his audience. They met O'Rourke's

triumphant sneer. In a moment O'Neill's mouth hardened. He stood upright, and his voice was clear and strong again.

‘I ask—and these are my last words to you—I ask, What are you going to get for your betrayal? Your priests are getting what priests always want, and always get—money. That is very well for them; but what are you getting? You are ready to be traitors. Do you want to be fools as well? Will you sell your country, and get nothing for it? Even Judas Iscariot got thirty pieces of silver for his betrayal. What are you going to get?’

The men whom he taunted could bear no more. They sprang up before him, threatening him. It seemed as if nothing could prevent their beating him down, when his voice rang out clear above their tumult:

‘You dogs! Do you dare to yelp about my heels and snarl at me? I am your master still. Stand back from me!’

Savagely passionate as they were, they shrank back from him, and he passed out.

## CHAPTER XIX

THE news of O'Neill's defeat at the meeting of his party was received with joy by his political opponents. Everyone regarded, or affected to regard, it as final. In Ireland the landlord party believed that their most dangerous enemy had been removed from the political world. They congratulated themselves daily on the fact that the fall of O'Neill meant the impotence of Nationalism for at least a generation. The English Government organs were jubilant. The defeat which threatened their party was happily averted, and they had every hope that the whole 'Golden Hero' agitation would have gone the way of other imbecile enthusiasms before it would be necessary to face the country at a General Election. Even the Nonconformists were relieved and felt happier. O'Neill was not a pleasant ally, and latterly they had begun to realize that he was likely to ask rather too high a price for his help in defeating the Government.

A curious feature of the general rejoicing was the unanimity with which everyone recognised O'Neill's virtues now that they were no longer afraid of him.

Even the Irish landlords spoke with a certain respect of his ability and strength.

Lord Clonfert met Sir Gerald the day after the news of the defeat arrived in Clogher. He made a decent effort to conceal his joy.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘so O’Neill is beaten. Of course I hate his politics: I always did. But, after all, the man has some of the instincts of a gentleman in him. He used to treat those fellows of his properly. He used to whip them to heel and keep them there. But, after all, what could he expect? If a man associates all his life with the lowest sweeps in the country, he can’t expect them to stand by him at a pinch. He might have known that scum like O’Rourke and the rest of them would turn on him the first chance they got.’

‘It was a shameful business,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘It makes me angry to think of it. I dare say you can understand that there was a great deal about O’Neill and his ways of working that I didn’t like. I know more of him now than I did at first, and I doubt if ever I should have cared to be a member of his party. If things had gone right with him, I should have kept out of politics. Now, if I am any use, I shall stand by him.’

‘I don’t blame you for that,’ said Lord Clonfert. ‘I should do the same in your position. Besides, I’d rather O’Neill had a following in the House of Commons. The nearer the two parties of Nationalists come to balancing each other, the more chance there

will be of peace and quietness for decent people. I suppose O'Neill will fight it out now, won't he? He's not the man to sit down under the decision of that meeting in Dublin.'

'I suppose he will,' said Sir Gerald. 'But things look rather hopeless at present.'

Public opinion in Clogher itself was in the main sympathetic with O'Neill. Father Fahy felt obliged to refrain from triumphing openly. He succeeded without much difficulty in preventing the League from expressing any opinion about the new national policy. Most of the members were anxious to avoid committing themselves until they were certain, in the first place, that there were to be two sides, and, if so, which side was going to be the stronger. Father Fahy cherished a hope that O'Neill might be contented to drop quietly out of politics altogether. He could then have afforded to be generous, and would have joined in a hero-worship of the lost leader.

O'Neill returned to Clogher very shortly after the Dublin meeting. Almost the first thing he did was to call on Sir Gerald and Lady Geoghegan. They were shocked to see the change which his few days' absence had made in him. He looked haggard and worn, like a man who has just emerged from a severe illness.

'We are glad to see you back again,' said Sir Gerald.

He felt a difficulty about offering direct sympathy or

alluding to the defeat in Dublin. O'Neill himself had no shrinking from the subject.

'They went back on me,' he said. 'You heard that, of course. The newspapers have been full of my affairs. They make a mistake, though, in thinking that they have done with me altogether.'

'We were very sorry to hear it,' said Lady Geoghegan. 'I would like you to know that no one, except your wife of course, feels for you as much as we do.'

'Thank you,' said O'Neill. 'It is good to hear things like that, especially from people like you. But I don't want either sympathy or pity. I didn't come here to lament over my fallen fortunes. I am going to fight it out with O'Rourke and the priests. I came to talk to you about my next move. Please don't go away, Lady Geoghegan. I would like you to hear what I have got to say.'

O'Neill told them the story of McCarty's visit to him before the meeting.

'I disliked him,' he added, 'for the evident state of funk he was in. I disliked him still more for the hysterical kind of way he spoke. I thought he was a hypocrite when he said he was sorry to oppose me. It turned out afterwards I was wrong.'

'I don't think much,' said Hester, 'of expressions of sorrow coming from a man who means to do you an injury.'

She was flushed and a little excited. O'Neill's

appearance and the recollection of what he had been through moved her.

‘Well, nor do I,’ said O’Neill. ‘But the human mind is a queer thing, and McCarty’s is a particularly queer specimen. I don’t in the least profess to understand him, and I don’t want to; but his peculiar conscience led him to do an interesting and important thing.’

‘Did he come back to his allegiance?’ asked Sir Gerald. ‘I could understand his doing that, after he had seen what happened at the meeting.’

‘Not quite,’ said O’Neill. ‘But he called at my hotel the evening after the meeting. At first I thought he wanted to snivel, and tried to turn him out. It appeared that what he really wanted was to let me know that he meant to resign his seat in Parliament. He said he couldn’t follow me, but that he wouldn’t fight against me either.’

‘Poor man!’ said Lady Geoghegan. ‘He must have gone through a good deal.’

‘I don’t see why he is to be pitied,’ said O’Neill. ‘Things were simple enough for him. Either I was right, in which case he ought to have stood by me, or his priests were right, and then he ought to have done his best to trample on me. What he has done is to try and make an impossible kind of compromise. Any way, as I said before, McCarty and his conscience don’t matter. He is contemptible, and he is done with. The question is, Who is going to take his place?’

O'Neill looked at Sir Gerald and then at Lady Geoghegan. Both of them guessed what was coming next, and were affected, but very differently. Lady Geoghegan felt a sudden hot thrill of intense excitement. She flushed deeply, and her eyes sparkled. Sir Gerald grew slowly numb. His face lost all expression. He sat looking vacantly at John O'Neill. He saw clearly before him the prospect of a choice that he dreaded. He realized that he must either plunge himself into a contest where he had small sympathy with either side, or be false to a friend, and that in the moment of his greatest need.

'Of course I shall fight for the seat,' said O'Neill. 'If I can get the proper man as my nominee, I stand a chance of beating O'Rourke and the priests. With an ordinary candidate I should have no hope in a constituency like this. I must have a local man, and a man who won't be afraid of the priests. I should like a man whose position will command respect, who will be above the reproach of having been hired.'

Lady Geoghegan turned to him eagerly :

'It is Gerald that you want. Oh, how splendid ! We will work for you, and we shall win. I know we must win.'

John O'Neill looked at Sir Gerald. It would have been better if the outburst had come from him, but he sat there, curiously impassive, without speaking.

'It is you that I want,' said O'Neill. 'If I quoted

Scripture like your friend O'Hara, I should say, "Thou art the man!"'

There was a short silence. Hester looked in wonder at her husband. At last he spoke :

'I shall do what you want. I don't expect that we shall win. It is not clear to me that there will be much gained even if we do. Will one more follower be any use to you ?'

'No,' said O'Neill. 'One more would be no use to me, but a victory here and now would be everything. The Irish voters are very highly organized, more so than any in the kingdom. Little or nothing is left to the individual. We may reckon that they will all go one way. It is always so when organization is strong. If we win here, we shall give the rest of Ireland the lead it wants. We shall stand a good chance of carrying the League with us everywhere.'

'I do not think that we have any chance of winning,' said Sir Gerald. 'I am a very poor fighter. I think you would do better if you chose some other man.'

'How can you talk in such a way, Gerald?' said Hester. 'What chance have we of winning if you go into the fight expecting to be beaten ?'

'There is no other man,' said O'Neill, 'who would have the slightest chance. It is you or nobody.'

'What are we to do?' said Hester. 'When shall we begin ?'

'We shall begin at once,' said O'Neill. 'We have

this advantage over O'Rourke : that I don't think he knows yet about McCarty's resignation. We can have a meeting in Clogher on Sunday week. I shall get down O'Dwyer to speak. I can certainly count on him to support me. Of course he is rather an extreme man. He may say outrageous things. But I like him. He's one of the very few of the whole set whom I respect. He never took a penny of allowance from our funds. I found out one time that he was living in London in an attic on one meal a day, and never missed a division in the House when I wanted him. It was as much as I could do to get him to dine with me twice a week while the session lasted. I think he will do all he can for you, Sir Gerald. He almost worships the memory of your father. He has him in a frame over his bed along with Emmet and Wolfe Tone.'

'Shall we have him stop with us?' said Lady Geoghegan. 'I should so much like to make friends with him.'

'You had better let him come to us,' said O'Neill. 'He will be more comfortable, really. Your servants would make him miserable. I don't suppose he's ever had a dress-coat in his life.'

'What about the newspapers?' said Sir Gerald.

'Ah! There you touch our weak point,' said O'Neill. 'There are just two honest National papers in Ireland. One is your friend O'Hara's *Critic*, which really doesn't count in a business like this; the other is *The Croppy*, and it's not much of a rag, although it is

sound. It's a penny weekly, and has no great circulation. The rest of them, dailies and weeklies, are more or less owned or run by the priests. I'm leaving the anti-Irish papers out of the count. I'll coerce *The Connaught News* man into, at all events, holding his tongue. I'll get *The Croppy* to do us some good strong articles, and we'll circulate it free for the next six weeks. That's about all we can do. The rest of the papers will abuse us up and down, and, of course, they'll have the best of it there. One comfort is, that twenty per cent. of the electors can't read, so a good deal of that work will be wasted.'

In the centre of the fair-green in Clogher there stands a recently-erected statue. As a work of art it met with the unqualified contempt of Dennis Browne. As an expression of popular sentiment it was remarkable. It represented Humbert, the French General who attempted the desperate task of rescuing Ireland from English rule. One brief flicker of success had rested on his arms, and only one. Yet he has become something of a popular hero, and his poor little victory at Castlebar has been bragged of and sung about as if it were a counterpoise to Aughrim and the ferocious suppression of the rebellion in Wexford. It seemed significant to Sir Gerald that the platform from which he was to address his first audience was erected beneath this statue. The shadow of General Humbert would fall upon him while he spoke.

It came home to him that he was engaged to work with men who hated not only England and her Parliament, but the Empire and the King. He accepted his position helplessly. There was no one to whom he could explain himself—from whom he could look for sympathy or comfort. Hester was excited and enthusiastic. He knew that she would neither listen nor attempt to understand. Lord Clonfert would, indeed could, only answer his complaints with a reminder that he had been warned beforehand, and was reaping what he had sowed. He thought of O'Hara, and wished for his presence at Clogher. It occurred to him that he might write to the editor. It was a mere chance whether he got an answer at all, and in all probability the answer, if he did get it, would be delayed beyond the period of possible usefulness. Yet even to express himself would be a relief to him, and he decided to write.

Clogher was animated, and even gay, on the day of Sir Gerald's meeting. The country people remained in town after Mass. Others who worshipped at outlying chapels streamed in along the roads all through the forenoon. The band of the Temperance Sodality, against the will of Father Fahy, paraded the streets and played the inevitable 'God save Ireland.' The police watched helplessly while publicans drove a roaring trade with *bonâ fide* travellers.

As the hour of the meeting drew near, the crowds gravitated towards the fair-green. 'The boys' were

evidently in high good-humour. They cheered tumultuously when Sheid Amoch, with a few other local politicians, ascended the platform. O'Dwyer was the first of the chief personages to put in an appearance. His reception was more doubtful. He had long been a marked man as one who was 'agin' the clergy,' and the country people had not yet realized that it was from his platform that O'Neill was going to appeal to them.

Shortly after one o'clock Sir Gerald's carriage drew up on the outskirts of the crowd. O'Neill was with him. Lady Geoghegan had insisted on being present, and Mrs. O'Neill, who rarely attended such meetings, had come to keep her in countenance. There was no mistake about the warmth of their reception. The shouting completely drowned the band's best efforts at a welcoming bray.

O'Neill looked quickly round him as he mounted the platform.

'We've done very well,' he said to Sir Gerald. 'We've got a good crowd. There are reporters here from the Dublin papers, and we ought to be flattered at the number of police they have drafted into the town to keep us in order.' He touched O'Dwyer on the shoulder. 'You see those two men just below the platform, on the left. I know them. They are shorthand writers from the Castle. They mean to report us to Chesney. Be careful what you say.'

O'Dwyer nodded, but it was plain to O'Neill that he

paid little heed to the warning. The excitement of the crowds and the cheering had mounted to his brain, and even then he was in no condition to measure his words.

O'Neill was the first to speak. The moment he rose the people pressed round the platform to hear him. The silence was so complete that the whimpering of a puppy in the outskirts of the crowd was plainly audible. The usual relative positions of speaker and audience were reversed. It did not appear that O'Neill was extremely anxious to be heard or that the people were paying him a compliment by listening. On the contrary, the audience set themselves to hear, as if each word were life or death to them, while O'Neill seemed wholly indifferent about the fate of what he said. He made no appeal to emotion or passion, and it was noticeable that he was hardly ever interrupted with cheers. He flung his sentences out from him at the crowd as if they were missile weapons meant to penetrate the mind. In his whole speech he insisted upon only one point. He presented it, or thrust it forward, time after time, incisively, irresistibly. 'O'Rourke and his friends have made an alliance with one of the English parties, therefore they have lost the confidence of the Irish people.' That was all that O'Neill said, but he said it in many ways. He enforced the necessary sequence of his 'therefore' with instances from history, bygone and contemporary. Alliance with England always had meant loss for Ireland. It always would. Again and again he stated his facts,

and drew his inference in language so nakedly simple that Sir Gerald came to long for some single adjective to break the dead monotony of the demonstration ; but there was none. He sat down after a final repetition of his theme : ‘O’Rourke has lost the confidence of the Irish people.’

Sir Gerald came next. The crowd cheered him madly. It was something for them to see a landlord, one of the class whom they had learnt to regard as their natural enemies, standing among their leaders, about to appeal to them in the name of Ireland. The very novelty of the thing secured a silence for the opening of Sir Gerald’s speech ; but he could not use his opportunity. The sea of upturned faces frightened him ; the cheers bewildered him. His own voice, when he heard it, seemed strange and remote. His first sentences failed altogether to reach any but those who were nearest to him. Still, the people tried to hear him, and their evident friendliness restored him some measure of self-confidence. He told them of his own early love for Ireland, of his desire to serve her, of the perplexities which held him back, of the difficulties he still saw before him. The crowd failed to follow or understand him. One by one their faces were turned from him, till his eyes no longer met other eyes fixed expectantly on his. The pressure round the platform got less, as men on the outskirts drew away and began to talk to each other. Sir Gerald noticed, with a feeling of despair, that the reporters had ceased to scribble in their note-books. What he said was

evidently unimportant. He struggled on to the end of the speech he had prepared, and then sat down. He glanced timidly at O'Neill.

'I have failed,' he said.

'Yes,' he said, 'badly. Never mind. O'Dwyer will pull them together, and, after all, speaking isn't everything.'

'O'Dwyer's task was a hard one, for he had to win back the attention of a crowd which had grown tired of being talked to, and was ill-inclined to listen to anyone. At the very beginning of his speech he plunged into excited rhetoric. He gesticulated wildly, flinging his body forwards and jerking it back suddenly, reaching out with his hands to the people at one moment, casting hands and arms together over his head the next. He shamelessly shouted ancient catchwords, roared out phrases battered with long use. The whole seemed a very caricature of mob oratory. Sir Gerald shrank back in his chair ashamed. Soon he realized that behind the shouting and the posturing there lay something real, that the man actually meant what his bombast implied, that the catchwords were as real to him as to the men who used them first. The crowd, too, had begun to listen, and to cheer occasionally. Quotations, tattered out of the possibility of recognition by years of ignoble use, caught again from O'Dwyer a power of moving men. A wild burst of cheering greeted a version of the thousand times repeated 'The West's awake.' Sir Gerald seemed almost to see the muscles of men's

limbs stiffen under them when O'Dwyer's voice rang out with the prayer that Ireland might be 'A nation once again.' The speaker had gripped his audience and held them. O'Neill smiled, but anxiously. It remained to be seen whether O'Dwyer could hold himself. The Castle reporters were busy with their note-books.

'What claim has Sir Gerald Geoghegan on your votes? Does he claim them as your landlord? As a gentleman? No, for the ancient tyrannies are broken. The time for such claims is gone. Is it likely that your great leader, John O'Neill, wants to sell you again into captivity, now when you are standing on the very borders of the promised land? But what claim has he on your votes? Are you to support him because he is rich, because he is able to give great sums to the party treasury, can pay men to go to Westminster and vote with him? We leave such appeals to O'Rourke, with his traitors and his priests, the men who have sold themselves and Ireland for a bribe. Sir Gerald Geoghegan is rich, but it is in spite of his riches, not because of them, that we ask you to support him. We want no rich men to pay us for saving Ireland. What claim, then, has he on your votes?'

He paused; then suddenly there poured from him a torrent of impassioned words. He described the career of Gerald Geoghegan, 'the rebel,' step by step till he brought him to the court-house in Clonmel. Cheer after cheer greeted the climax of the story.

Sir Gerald himself felt the excitement tingling through his veins. He, too, rose and cheered. O'Dwyer lost all self-control. He seized Sir Gerald by the arm and dragged him forward.

‘We ask you to vote for him,’ he cried, ‘because he is the son of such a man; because he will not fear to go the way his father went; because we are sick of politicians and priests who prate and cant of law and order; because it is time to have done with those who talk, and then sell their own souls and Ireland’s liberty; because henceforth we mean to fight England with the only weapons that have ever conquered tyranny.’

## CHAPTER XX

O'NEILL and his wife sat late that evening discussing the meeting and the speeches.

‘I am sorry that Sir Gerald failed,’ said O'Neill. ‘However, things might have been worse. O'Dwyer did well afterwards. After all, speaking is a difficult thing, and it was his first attempt. I dare say he will do better at Ross on Tuesday—that is to say, if there is a meeting at Ross.’

‘Why do you say “if”?’ asked his wife. ‘I thought the Ross meeting was settled.’

‘It is settled so far as we can settle it. But you must not forget that we have the Government to reckon with. I've no doubt that O'Dwyer's speech will ruffle Chesney a bit when he reads it. I've known meetings proclaimed for less than what he said to-day.’

‘But surely they will not venture to stop you in a case like this! Why, it is practically a contest between you and their own supporters. Public opinion would never allow them.’

‘My dear Lucy, you appear to forget that you are living in Ireland. What on earth has public

opinion got to do with the actions of our Government? Besides, you know, O'Dwyer really did pitch it pretty high to-day. He talked rank rebellion.'

'I know he did,' said Mrs. O'Neill. 'I don't think Sir Gerald liked it. He was excited, of course, at the time. I was excited myself, and Lady Geoghegan was beside herself. But he was uneasy afterwards. I watched him while we were driving home. No man would like to be committed to the sort of thing O'Dwyer said to-day. Are you taking him with you to Ross?'

'Of course I am. I fetched him down to make speeches, and I'm not going to waste his time. Besides, the Ross meeting will be an important one if they let us hold it. Tuesday is a big fair day there, and we shall get all the farmers.'

'I should not wonder if Sir Gerald makes some sort of protest,' said Mrs. O'Neill; 'I don't think he will stand another of O'Dwyer's speeches.'

'In that case I hope they will proclaim the meeting. I've known a good many sentimental Loyalists get wicked when they found themselves being bullied by the police. Sir Gerald won't be so peaceable when he has been hustled off a platform and had his hat blocked by the "hirelings of the oppressor," as O'Dwyer calls them.'

The next morning brought the fulfilment of Mrs. O'Neill's prophecy. Sir Gerald wrote protesting against the line which O'Dwyer had taken. He

declined to allow himself to be identified with what he described as sedition.

O'Neill showed the letter to his wife when she came into his study.

'You were right,' he said. 'Now, I wonder how Lady Geoghegan feels about the matter,'

'What are you going to do?' asked his wife.

'Here's my answer.'

'DEAR SIR GERALD' (she read),

'O'Dwyer is advertised to speak at Ross on Tuesday, and of course must do so. I hope that nothing will prevent your going there with us. I have ordered a waggonette from the hotel to take us over, and shall have a seat for you. It would be a pity to keep your horses out all day. We start at one o'clock sharp. We can discuss your difficulties afterwards.'

'Do you think that will do?' asked Mrs. O'Neill—  
'I mean, with a man like Sir Gerald?'

'I think it will. He's weak, Lucy; you know that as well as I do. He's no real good. He'll boggle and shy at the first fence we put him at; but I must have him. He's the only candidate that will give me a chance of winning this election, and it's sink or swim with me here. If I lose this seat, I am likely to be beaten altogether.'

O'Neill rested his elbow on the table as he spoke. His hand stroked his forehead upwards rapidly and

repeatedly, as if trying to smooth out the wrinkles that gathered there. His eyes were half closed. In spite of his vigorous words, he seemed like a man who was weary and despondent.

‘I wish,’ he said, ‘you would go over there this afternoon and see Lady Geoghegan. I hate asking you to do things of this kind for me. But you might get a chance of talking the matter over with her, and getting her to persuade her husband to go with us on Tuesday. You will know the best way to go about a job of the kind. After all, it’s not a very fine thing for him to desert me now, just when the hounds have so nearly pulled me down. Will you go, Lucy?’

‘Of course I will.’

She stooped and kissed him before she left. He looked up at her with a queer dumb gratitude in his eyes.

Her task was a very easy one. Perhaps Hester was really braver than her husband, or perhaps she only half appreciated the meaning of what O’Dwyer had said. Certainly she was far more excited than frightened, and readily promised to do all in her power to persuade Sir Gerald to go on.

Tuesday dawned stormy and wet. As the day went on the wind died down, leaving a heavy blanket of clouds to empty themselves in a dreary persistent downpour. Sir Gerald found O’Neill depressed and silent. He coughed incessantly, and resented his wife’s attempts to wrap him up against the weather.

He had got no hint of any intention on the part of the Government to stop his meeting.

O'Dwyer was excited and nervous. He fidgeted about, buttoning and unbuttoning his great frieze coat, a garment whose original gray had long ago been changed by frequent soakings into a sickly green. The two emaciated horses dripped forlornly with down-hanging heads. Six long miles of shelterless road separated them from Ross. O'Neill huddled in a corner, silent except for his coughing. O'Dwyer, after some efforts at conversation with Sir Gerald, relapsed into half-audible recitations of specially effective portions of his speech. The waggonette splashed and bumped along among the pools and loose stones. About a mile from Ross the driver suddenly pulled up his horses and turned round upon his box.

'Look there,' he said, pointing with his whip to a hill about a hundred yards ahead of them. O'Neill stood up and gazed through the rain.

'The police!' he said. He seemed suddenly to have recovered his strength and buoyancy. 'Go on,' he said to the driver. 'Lay your whip on the horses, and trot up in proper style.'

O'Dwyer had already stripped off his frieze coat. He looked like a man preparing for a physical encounter. Sir Gerald expected to see him roll up his sleeves.

'By the Lord!' he ejaculated, 'we'll let them have it. This is the grossest tyranny.'

‘What is it?’ asked Sir Gerald.

‘The police,’ said O’Neill. ‘They mean to stop us.’

‘What right have they to interfere with us?’

‘Right!’ said O’Dwyer; and Sir Gerald was surprised at the extreme bitterness with which he spoke. ‘Are you an Irishman, and ask by what right the police act? You’ll learn a lesson to-day that will remain with you for the rest of your life. Right! There’s no such thing as right in the government of Ireland. There’s force, and there’s trickery, and there’s bribery, but no one ever heard of such a thing as right.’

The driver pulled up with a jerk opposite a line of police drawn across the road. The men stood motionless, with their carbines in their hands. The rain dripped from their helmets and gray capes. Their faces shone through the wet wholly unemotional. They bore no expression of hatred, anger, or contempt. One might imagine the best of the Roman infantry standing with the same look of confident indifference between contending factions of a conquered barbarian people. O’Neill stepped from the waggonette.

‘Who is in command of this force?’ he asked.

A gray-haired officer stepped forward. He held his sword in his left hand to prevent it dragging in the mud. When he stood still his spurs struck each other with a jangle.

‘I am sorry to say, Mr. O’Neill, that I cannot allow you to proceed.’

‘May I ask,’ said O’Neill, ‘by what authority you propose to prevent two members of Parliament from addressing the electors of the county?’

‘I am sorry to say, Mr. O’Neill,’ repeated the officer, ‘that I cannot allow you to proceed.’

‘Am I to understand that if I attempt to drive on you will use force to stop me?’

Again came the formula, an irritating reiteration:

‘I am sorry to say, Mr. O’Neill, that I cannot allow you to proceed.’

O’Dwyer sprang forward.

‘I denounce this interference as an utterly illegal act of high-handed tyranny. I shall appeal to whatever shadow of law there may be left in Ireland. I shall appeal to the House of Commons. I shall not yield except to actual violence.’

The police stood absolutely impassive. The officer smiled slightly, and checked himself into gravity again.

‘Do your orders bid you stop anyone else except me?’ asked O’Neill—‘Mr. O’Dwyer, for instance?’

‘I am sorry to say, Mr. O’Neill, that I cannot allow either you or Mr. O’Dwyer to proceed.’

‘Can Sir Gerald Geoghegan pass?’ demanded O’Neill.

The officer paused before replying. He stepped behind his men and beckoned. A heavily-cloaked resident magistrate emerged from the shelter of a roadside cattle-shed and opened his umbrella. A

short consultation followed, and an examination of some papers. The officer returned to O'Neill.

'I shall allow Sir Gerald Geoghegan to pass,' he said, 'if he gives me his word to make no political speech in Ross.'

O'Dwyer laughed harshly.

'Will your honour give me leave to go to the fair?' he said. 'Sure, it's a poor orphan boy I am, that wants to be buying a couple of bonhams or a calf maybe. Anybody will tell your honour that I'm as dacent and quiet a boy as any in the country, that wouldn't say a word agin the Government for all you could give me.'

'Of course,' said Sir Gerald, 'I shall give no such promise.'

'I demand,' said O'Neill, 'to see the warrant or written authority by which you prevent us from going on with our perfectly lawful business.'

The officer returned to the shelter of his formula.

'I am sorry to say, Mr. O'Neill, that I cannot allow you to proceed.'

'I didn't ask you to allow me to proceed,' said O'Neill. 'I asked you to show me your authority for stopping me.'

The officer stood rigid. He seemed like some automaton wound up to utter certain words beyond which his machinery would not carry him.

'I am sorry to say, Mr. O'Neill, that I——'

Sir Gerald's temper suddenly gave way. He felt that the phrase had become utterly intolerable. His

nerves cried out against being smitten again with the identical words uttered in the identical tone.

‘Damn it!’ he said. ‘Don’t say that infernal thing again!’

O’Neill looked at him with a curious smile.

‘Good,’ he said; ‘you have found your temper.’

Sir Gerald was puzzled. The moment he had uttered the words he was sorry for them. It did not seem to him at all a good thing to have cursed a policeman for doing his duty. He had lost his temper. Why did O’Neill use that odd phrase saying that he had found it?

A sergeant stepped from the ranks and spoke to the officer, who turned his head quickly towards the field on the left of the road. Everyone’s eyes followed his. O’Dwyer had jumped the ditch which divided the field from the road, and was running across the grass towards Ross. The officer gave a brief order. Two men dropped their carbines, threw off their capes, and started in pursuit. The chase did not last long. O’Dwyer had only a short start, and ran badly. When the police overtook him, there was a struggle, but in a few minutes they were dragging him back. His clothes were torn and muddy when they laid him on the ground at O’Neill’s feet. As they resumed their places in the ranks they glanced at the officer for approval. Their expression reminded Sir Gerald of the look on a retriever’s face when he has successfully brought back the bird he was sent for.

Two men appeared dimly through the rain driving cattle from the fair at Ross. They stopped and spoke together when they saw the police drawn up across the road. The bullocks wandered slowly on, and only stopped to sniff suspiciously when they arrived within a few feet of the armed men. After a while their drovers followed them. O'Neill climbed on to the box of the waggonette and shouted to them over the heads of the police.

'Are you coming from the fair at Ross?'

The men recognised him at once.

'We are, your honour, sir. We're driving Mr. Maillia's bullocks back to rail them for the buyer in Clogher.'

'Go back to Ross, one of you,' shouted O'Neill, 'and tell the boys that there'll be no meeting there to-day, because the police have stopped me on the road. Tell them to come along, a few hundred of them, and I'll say what I want to say to them here on the road.'

The police-officer stepped forward.

'Mr. O'Neill,' he said, looking up, 'I shall allow no political speech-making here.'

'Tell them,' shouted O'Neill to the drovers, 'that, if there should happen to be a couple of cross cows or a kicking horse in the fair, to bring them along. The police will like to move about a bit after standing still so long in the rain.'

The officer turned from O'Neill and went through his men to the drovers. At first he seemed to be

reasoning with them, finally to be threatening one of them. O'Neill watched him keenly, and at last shouted again :

'Do as I bid you, boys; never mind the police. It will be a bad day for you when the League hears of your disobeying me.'

One of the two men answered him :

'Don't you be threatening me, Mr. O'Neill. I'm a Protestant and an independent man. I don't care a damn for you or your League! But I don't care a damn for the police, either! I'm for fair-play, if it was the devil asked for it, and I'll see that the boys get your message. It could be, though, that they won't come next or nigh you when they do. Father Fahy and his two curates and the parish priest of Ross and more of the same gentry has been to and fro among them since the morning. You'll know yourself what they're there for better nor me.'

He turned and trudged back towards Ross through the rain. O'Neill climbed slowly down from the box, while the police opened their ranks to let Mr. Maillia's bullocks through. He shivered and coughed. Sir Gerald tried to persuade him to seek such shelter as the waggonette might afford, representing that they might wrap themselves in rugs and keep tolerably dry during the wait that lay before them. O'Neill refused to do anything but pace up and down in front of the police.

'Let me alone,' he said. 'I can't be any wetter than I am, and I couldn't endure to sit still.'

The police-officer approached Sir Gerald.

‘I wish,’ he said, ‘you would persuade Mr. O’Neill to go home. This exposure is enough to kill him.’

‘Who the devil asked you to interfere?’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I suppose your orders from Dublin Castle don’t extend to putting him to bed with a hot drink, do they?’

‘I beg your pardon,’ said the officer. ‘I had no right to offer advice. But I only did so in Mr. O’Neill’s interest.’

He spoke like a gentleman. Sir Gerald was once more keenly conscious of the bad taste of losing his temper and swearing.

‘I ought to beg your pardon,’ he said, ‘for speaking in a quite unjustifiable manner. I am sure you meant kindly.’

‘I hope,’ said the officer, ‘that you have too much sense of justice to blame me personally for what has occurred to-day. I can only obey my orders.’

‘I understand,’ said Sir Gerald.

‘I wish,’ said the officer, ‘you would take my advice and go home. There is nothing to be gained by staying here. You heard what that fellow said about the priests. They won’t let you hold your meeting. I’ve known Ireland, south and west, for forty years, and I tell you it’s no use your fighting the priests. Everyone that ever tried got beaten and went under. The game is not good enough. Besides—you won’t mind my saying this; I’m old enough to

be your father—it's not a very dignified position for one of the first gentlemen in the county to be disputing with a lot of bobbies on the public road. Come now, is it ?'

He smiled as he asked the question.

Every word that the officer said struck Sir Gerald as true. He felt the painful indignity of his position. He was convinced that it was hopeless to fight the priests. The battle would be a vile one in any case. There opened up before his mind a prospect of appeals to the worst passions of the mob, of detestable tactics, of utterly sordid details. Besides, he was not sure if he wanted to beat the priests. He knew by heart all that could be said about their tyranny and greed, their craft and narrow dogmatism. But he remembered also Father Fahy's care for the poor people out on the mountains and bogs. It did not seem to him either possible or right to set these people free from their priests. Surely, life would be better spent in taking care of them and trying to lift them out of the quagmire of their poverty.

He was depressed and sickened by the experiences of the last few days. He no longer saw any heroism in the struggle before him, and wished heartily that he could have done with the whole thing. There rose up in his mind a vision of what his life might be. He saw a long vista of peaceful days, with Hester by his side, with children, perhaps, growing up around his knees. He thought of the ordered routine, the deference, the honour and affection

which might surround him; of pleasant intercourse with men whose ways and thoughts would not jar on him, and with ladies who were gracious and benign.

His heart rebelled at the magnitude of the sacrifice he was called upon to make. After all, why should he do it? Who was he, that he should try to set the crooked straight? Was he sure that he was even attempting that? Sure that he was not engaged in making the crooked crooked? His mind worked hopelessly back to its starting-point.

He stood beside the waggonette and looked at O'Dwyer, crouched, dripping, and muddy at his feet. Beyond was the motionless line of police. Up and down in front of them O'Neill still paced, his hands clenched, his eyes turning now and again, almost hopelessly expectant, towards the long stretch of road that led to Ross. Sir Gerald knew that no such thoughts as filled his own mind were possible for either of the other two. O'Dwyer would fight passionately and madly against the priests, against England, against anyone who threatened his dream of an independent Ireland. And O'Neill—it was impossible even to imagine his ever yielding. Sir Gerald sighed. He knew that he could not desert them now, that he must be dragged on, an unwilling recruit, upon a desperate enterprise, uncertain even of the justice of the cause for which he fought.

A solitary figure appeared upon the road which led from Ross. O'Neill stopped his pacing to and fro and

stood watching. O'Dwyer got up and stood beside him. In a few minutes it became possible to recognise Michael McCarty. The police-officer went to meet him, and the magistrate once more left the shelter of his shed. There was a short conversation between the three, and then McCarty passed through the police and approached O'Neill. He stood, a very pitiful figure, with his hat in his hands and his head bowed. The rain ran down his face and dripped from his drenched clothes. At first he seemed unable to speak.

'Well,' said O'Neill at last, 'I suppose they won't come to meet me from Ross.'

'They will not,' said McCarty almost inaudibly.

It was all he said, and, indeed, there was no need for any more. Sir Gerald understood and pitied him. O'Neill also understood. He looked at McCarty, and Sir Gerald had never seen or imagined an expression of such intense contempt as his face wore.

'You are cowards,' he said very slowly—'a nation of cowards. I am ashamed to call myself an Irishman. Go away from me.'

McCarty shrank as if the lash of a whip had cut him. He turned a pitiful face to O'Dwyer, and then to Sir Gerald, as if he appealed for shelter from the storm that withered him. Then he turned and walked slowly back towards Ross.

'Come home,' said O'Neill hoarsely. 'There is no good to be got by stopping here.'

They drove back to Clogher in silence. It was only

when Sir Gerald was getting out of the waggonette at his own gate that O'Neill spoke :

‘ Don’t think that we are beaten. We shall make a good fight yet against the allied forces of the priests and the English. The Government and the Church are in league against us. I have no doubt that to-day’s business was arranged between them. Come and see me to-morrow.’

## CHAPTER XXI

SIR GERALD was tired and irritable when Hester met him in the hall.

‘Gerald,’ she said, ‘you’re very late. Do be quick about dressing. Mr. Browne is here, and I don’t want to go in to see him till you are ready.’

‘Good Lord!’ said Sir Gerald, ‘I completely forgot that I had asked him to dinner and to sleep here to-night. I wish to God it was any other day he had come!’ I’m so wretchedly tired and disgusted.’

‘Poor Gerald! how horrid of me not to have asked you how you got on! What happened? I hope Mr. O’Dwyer didn’t say anything you didn’t like. How did your speech go off?’

‘There was neither meeting nor speeches. The police stopped us.’

‘The police! Oh!’

Hester’s voice betrayed the fact that she was really shocked. There is something about any contact with the police which brings with it a feeling of disgrace. The stigma of having been once arrested for drunkenness and disorderly conduct would cling to a respect-

able citizen even though his innocence of the charge were afterwards made clear as the noon-day.

Sir Gerald was not inclined to spare her feelings.

‘Yes, I have been in conflict with the police. I brawled with a constable on the public road. I cursed him in the most abominable manner. He ought, I suppose, to have arrested me and locked me up. That was pleasant, wasn’t it? The policeman behaved like a gentleman. I have probably earned a reputation as a rowdy. I am inclined to think, Hester,’ he added bitterly, ‘that your mother was right when she tried to prevent you marrying an Irish Nationalist.’

‘Gerald dear,’ she said, ‘I’m so sorry. It was all my fault for persuading you to go to the horrid meeting. But you must come up and dress quickly. Mr. Browne is waiting all this time.’

Dry clothes and a clean shirt restored Sir Gerald’s self-respect to some extent, and he faced Dennis Browne in the drawing-room with a fair imitation of a smile of welcome.

‘I’m afraid,’ said the poet, ‘that I am rather intruding on you this evening. I can quite understand that you are very busy.’

‘You are very welcome,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I’m sorry for being late and leaving you so long alone. I have only just got home.’

‘Electioneering, of course,’ said Browne. ‘It must be a fascinating occupation. You must relate your experiences.’

Sir Gerald shrank from giving an account of the afternoon's proceedings to Dennis Browne.

'I wonder,' he said, 'what has happened to dinner. I'm nearly starved. I think I shall ring the bell and try to hurry things up a little.'

After dinner Dennis Browne made himself comfortable in a large arm-chair before the library fire, with a pile of cigarettes beside him.

'Now,' he said, 'let's hear all about how you have been getting on. I'm sure Lady Geoghegan is even more interested than I am.'

'I don't think,' said Sir Gerald, 'that there is really anything to tell that would interest you.'

'On the contrary,' said Browne, 'there's hardly anything to tell that wouldn't. I assure you there is nothing more exciting to a good Catholic like me than to watch someone else having a go at the priests. I need scarcely tell you that my sympathies are entirely on your side.'

'In that case I'm afraid the result will disappoint you. We are going to be beaten.'

'Really! Do you know, I'm not surprised. I was sure you would be; but the struggle will be just as interesting to me.'

Sir Gerald remained silent. He felt that it would be really impossible for him to tell his story to this amused and cynical listener. Dennis Browne seemed in no way put out.

'As a Catholic I respect and honour the priests,' he said; 'they fulfil a really useful function in society.'

To me personally they are quite indispensable. I can't imagine how you Protestants get on without a priesthood.'

He paused, and lit a fresh cigarette. As neither Sir Gerald nor Hester spoke, he went on meditatively :

'The business of a priest is to deal with penitents. His success depends partly on his skill in appreciating the nature of the individual, and partly on his capacity for stage-management. I know of no more agreeable emotion than repentance. Confession to a priest, who is capable of understanding and suggesting, is a species of spiritual massage. The ceremonies of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday in a Catholic country affect me with an even keener delight than that of the preliminary sin. Of course there must be real sin beforehand ; otherwise one would not wish for absolution, and the whole thing would become a bore. I have often felt the want of some new sin, something really monstrous. I can imagine that the ensuing repentance would be very exquisite.'

He paused again, gazing mournfully into the fire. Hester glanced a mute appeal to her husband, but before Sir Gerald had hit upon a way of changing the subject, Browne began again :

'The Irish priests, from the point of view of an educated Catholic, are a failure. In the first place, they have not the remotest idea of how to manage ceremonies. I assure you that Ash Wednesday in Dublin would hardly stir the pulse of the most

emotional girl. Then, in this country the priests make the absurd mistake of preventing the people from sinning. Now, I put it to you, Lady Geoghegan, as an impartial outsider, how can a man repent properly if he has not been allowed to sin ?

‘I’m not what you call a Catholic,’ said Hester, ‘so I am afraid that I can’t understand what you mean by sinning and repenting.’

‘My dear lady,’ said Dennis Browne, ‘you are very severe on us poor Catholics. Are we the only people who occasionally sin ? Surely you yourself—but perhaps not. Believe me, you miss a great deal, you really do ! What is there worth getting in life except emotion ? If you neither sin nor repent, you lose two of the major emotions.’

‘I think,’ said Hester, addressing her husband and ignoring Browne, ‘that I shall go to the drawing-room. Your smoke is becoming rather too much for me.’

‘Now,’ said Browne, after she had left, ‘I have been so unfortunate as to offend Lady Geoghegan a second time. I am exceedingly sorry.’

He did not look as if he were sorry. On the contrary, he seemed to be in full enjoyment of one of life’s minor emotions.

‘Really, you know,’ he went on, ‘there is a great deal of truth in what I say. The Irish priests have quite stepped out of their proper province in insisting upon an impossible standard of national morality.’

‘I don’t at all agree with you. I regard the morality of the Irish people as their great and peculiar glory.’

‘Indeed!’ said Browne. ‘But then—excuse my asking a blunt question—why are you and O’Neill fighting the priests?’

‘Because——’ said Sir Gerald, and then stopped.

Browne looked at him, mildly interrogatory. A phrase of O’Dwyer’s occurred to his mind: ‘We are fighting for liberty of thought and action.’

‘Yes,’ said Browne. ‘That is what I think Ireland wants—liberty from an absurd moral tyranny, liberty to take life’s joys when opportunity offers them, just like the inhabitants of any other Catholic country.’

‘The sort of liberty you mean,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘is utterly detestable.’

‘But, my dear sir, all liberty involves the removal of moral restraint. It must do that, and it seems to me altogether desirable that it should. That is why my sympathies are with you and O’Neill in the fight you are making.’

‘I don’t think,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘that you quite understand my position.’

‘I think I do, entirely. Pardon my saying so, but I fear you hardly understand it yourself. You want to break the political power of the priests, but to leave their moral power intact. To me that does not seem to be a desirable thing, even if it were possible. And is it possible? After all, who cares about political

power? A mere handful of men. For most of us, life is the same thing whoever makes the laws or spends the taxes. What really matters is morality. People who are condemned to a drab-coloured puritanism can't be happy. Can they?

Sir Gerald gazed at him in sheer amazement.

'You and O'Neill,' Browne went on, 'appear to me to be acting very foolishly when you rush at the political power of the priests with your heads down, as if you could butt it and batter it to the ground. Why don't you try to gradually undermine their moral power?'

Sir Gerald could hit on nothing more effective to say than a feeble 'Why don't you?'

'I do,' said Browne. 'You will probably call me diabolical. I don't attempt to defend myself. I do try to show people the delightfulness of moral freedom. I have no doubt that I shall ultimately succeed in undermining the power of the priests. I am just as sure of it as I am that you will fail. Once I can get the people to see the pleasures of moral freedom, they will begin to long for it, and then the power of the priests will be gone. Just at present I am writing a new play to illustrate the joy of living. Afterwards shall turn it into a novel. It is really this which keeps me here in the West. I am in search of local colour and incident.'

Dennis Browne's talk—and there was much more of it—greatly affected Sir Gerald. His day's work with O'Neill had outraged his sense of dignity and offended

his feelings as a gentleman. Browne's cynical immorality moved him more deeply still. He saw himself now as an ally in a crusade against righteousness. He had not understood before, as he thought he did now, that the wonderful power of the Church in Ireland was really necessary if the distinctive purity of the Irish was to be preserved. It seemed to him inconceivably horrible that he should be taking part, even the smallest part, in shattering the dam which kept out the tide of immorality. The debate of the afternoon renewed itself in his mind, but now the side which had seemed the selfish one was reinforced with considerations of religion and purity. The issue no longer remained doubtful. At whatever cost to his sense of loyalty and friendship, he must definitely break with O'Neill and withdraw from the political contest.

He shrank from telling Hester his decision, for he feared that her enthusiasm for O'Neill would lead her to oppose it. He found her waiting for him beside her bedroom fire.

'Now that I've got you alone at last,' she said, 'I want you to tell me all about what happened this afternoon. You don't really mean that you had a row with the police?'

'I had indeed,' he said, 'just as I told you. I behaved very badly.'

'Gerald dear, did they—how can I say it?—did they *touch* you?'

'If you mean, did they hustle me about by the

collar of the coat, they did not. They dragged O'Dwyer about a bit, and I dare say I deserved the same treatment; but the officer was a gentleman, and let me off.'

'Who was he?'

'I don't know his name. He was a tall, well-set-up man, with a gray moustache and rather a nice face. I dare say if one didn't happen to be a corner boy he would be a pleasant man to know.'

'I expect that was Mr. Lowry, the county inspector. He dined with us one night at home, I remember. Father likes him greatly. I wish he hadn't happened to be there. I can't bear to think of his having seen you.'

'I wish I hadn't been there,' said Sir Gerald gloomily.

'Indeed I wish you hadn't. It's too humiliating. Gerald, promise that you will never let it happen again.'

'My dear girl, it was you who persuaded me to go.'

'I know—I know. I wish I hadn't.'

'Hester, you have made it easier for me to tell you that I have made up my mind to give up standing for this seat in Parliament, and to leave O'Neill's party altogether.'

'Oh, Gerald!'

Her tone was half of protest, half, he fancied, of relief.

'It's not only that I dislike rows with the police,'

he went on, 'though I don't think they are suitable for a man in my position.'

'They are not,' said Hester with conviction.

'It's not only that. I've come to think that the Irish peasants are best left to the guidance of their priests. I see nothing but trouble and evil if they ever break free from it. I can't be one of those who try to emancipate them.'

'Yes,' said Hester doubtfully—'yes.'

'Dennis Browne helped me to see what emancipation really means. He thinks——'

'I can guess what he thinks, and I don't want to hear.'

'Well, I don't want to put my hand to that sort of work.'

'No, of course not. But, oh, Gerald isn't it a dreadful thing to have to desert poor Mr. O'Neill now? It may be right—I'm sure it is—but how will you bear to do it?'

Sir Gerald's forehead wrinkled hopelessly. His face was that of a man who is suffering acute physical pain.

'I have thought of that, Hester. You will believe me when I say that I hate myself for doing it.'

'And Ireland?' she asked. 'Is there anyone else except Mr. O'Neill who really cares for Ireland?'

Sir Gerald pushed his fingers through his hair with a gesture of positive despair.

'Hester dear, I can see no good to come for

Ireland any way. I cannot think of Ireland or work for Ireland. Hester, you may call me a coward, and I dare say I deserve it. I am giving the whole thing up. Ireland must go her own way, and work out her own salvation or damnation. I can't help her. I shall be one who looks on.'

'Gerald,' she said, 'have you forgotten your father?'

He looked at her for a moment, as if she had struck him. There was astonishment at first, and then pain with it, in his face. Then there was pain only, and he turned to leave her. In a moment she had left her chair and run to him. Her arms were round him and held him fast.

'I ought never to have said it,' she cried. 'It was cruel, and cowardly, and base. I have disgraced myself, and if you hate me for it you will do right.' She burst into sobs as she clung to him. Oh, I ought to have helped you, and I have made it harder. Can you ever forgive me?'

'There is nothing to forgive,' he said. 'You have only told me what I knew before—that I am weak and cowardly.'

'No, no!' she sobbed. 'You are brave. I believe that you are doing the hardest thing, the noblest thing.'

His hand stole softly over her hair. He stroked it very tenderly as she stood clinging to him with her face buried. At last he said slowly:

'Do you remember these lines, dearest?—

‘ “ We are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

She looked up in his face, and there was a gleam in her moist eyes.

‘ Yes,’ she said, ‘ and I remember the beginning of the passage, too :

‘ “ Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another !” ’

## CHAPTER XXII

AFTER breakfast next morning, when Sir Gerald expressed his intention of calling on John O'Neill, Dennis Browne at once offered to accompany him.

'It is a longish walk,' said Sir Gerald, anxious to avoid the embarrassment of Browne's presence at the interview he looked forward to. 'I hardly think you will care for it.'

'I would walk miles and miles for the sake of another interview with Mr. O'Neill,' Browne declared. 'I met him once, you know, at dinner here. He evidently took a dislike to me at first sight, or perhaps he was prejudiced against my reputation. He treated me with the frankest rudeness and contempt. He really made me quite angry, a sensation I had not enjoyed for years. I should so much like to get it renewed. I'm sure it must be very good for a man to feel angry. I have no actual medical authority for saying so, but I imagine that anger promotes the activity of the liver. I know that the morning after Mr. O'Neill irritated me I felt quite unusually cheerful and light-hearted. Do you think he will treat me with contempt to-day?'

‘As you appear to like it, I hope he will,’ said Sir Gerald. Browne smiled with evident satisfaction. ‘But do you think it is fair to go to a man’s house with the deliberate intention of baiting him?’

‘Last time,’ said Browne, ‘I thought he was baiting me. I think it is rather nice of me to go to see him. It’s quite early Christian of me. Isn’t it, Lady Geoghegan? I am offering the other cheek to the smiter.’

They found O’Dwyer in O’Neill’s study when they entered it. He was standing before the fire, leaning one elbow on the chimney-piece and biting his fingernails. In his other hand was a pipe which had been lit, but allowed to go out almost immediately. Sir Gerald introduced Dennis Browne to him, but O’Dwyer was evidently unaware of the poet’s reputation, for he merely nodded to him without speaking.

I am delighted,’ said Browne, ‘to make your acquaintance. I have often heard of you. You are a passionate and reckless lover of the Dark Rosaleen. I envy and respect you for it. I myself am not insensible to her charms; but I am, I regret to say, constitutionally timid.’ He sighed as he spoke. ‘You, as I understand from Sir Gerald Geoghegan, contemplate achieving the consummation of your passion without the blessing of the Church. I envy you. I can imagine no more rapturous situation. But will the lady consent?’

O'Dwyer stared at him, and then turned to Sir Gerald.

'Do you happen to know what your friend is talking about?'

'I beg your pardon,' said Browne, with an expression of benign patience. 'I ought to have made my meaning plainer. The Dark Rosaleen, sometimes called Kathaleen ny-Houlahan, is a poetic personification of Ireland. I should not like you to think, Mr. O'Dwyer, that I for a moment suspected you——'

'Can I speak to you alone for a few minutes?' said O'Dwyer to Sir Gerald. 'I have something rather important to say to you.'

'Pray don't allow me to be in the way,' said Browne. 'I shall step outside and look at the view. Not that I admire this West of Ireland scenery in the least. The contrasts are so blatantly obvious. The sea is quite flat, and the mountains stick up so into the sky. I hate things that stick up in a dogmatic way. These mountains give me the impression of doing it on purpose to annoy. Now, I like a brook and trees. There is a nice droopy kind of tree—I forget its name—which looks depressed, as if the constant cheerfulness of the brook rather bored it.'

He opened the window as he spoke, and retired gracefully on to the lawn.

'Who is he?' asked O'Dwyer.

'He's a poet and a dramatist. At present he is writing a play which is afterwards to be a novel. His

name is Dennis Browne. You must have heard of him.'

'Yes, I have heard of him. I did not connect his name with his work when you introduced him. I wonder whether he has got through life so far without being horsewhipped. I should be suprised to hear he has. But he does not matter. O'Neill is ill.'

His tone startled Sir Gerald.

'Is it serious?' he asked.

'It is,' said O'Dwyer—'very serious indeed. He came home last night shivering and feverish. Mrs. O'Neill got alarmed, and sent for a doctor early this morning. It turns out to be a bad attack of pneumonia with various complications. They have telegraphed to Dublin for another doctor.'

'My God!' said Sir Gerald. 'Poor Mrs. O'Neill!'

'She is a wonderful woman,' said O'Dwyer. 'I saw her when I came up here this morning. It was just after the doctor left. I knew from what she said that he had given her very little hope, but she took it without a sign of breaking down. She asked me to see you and arrange things.'

'Come back and lunch with me. We can talk things over afterwards—that is, if you think you can stand Browne for an hour or two. He is sure to leave in the afternoon.'

'Oh, I can stand Dennis Browne all right,' said O'Dwyer. 'The question is, whether Browne will be able to stand me. I'm not in the mood for tolerating

idiots. Perhaps I'd better not accept your invitation. I might make myself unpleasant.'

'If you make yourself unpleasant enough to turn Browne out of the house before luncheon, I shall not break my heart. But I don't believe anyone, except O'Neill, could shake the man's infernal self-conceit.'

They joined Browne on the lawn.

'I have been obliged,' he said, 'to turn my back on the view. It became quite intolerable. The sea to-day is not only quite flat, but muddy. I am not a connoisseur in oceans, but I own I should have expected the Atlantic to be green or blue or the Homeric purple. I am greatly disappointed in it. Are we going straight home again? I have not seen the great Mr. O'Neill. Am I not to have the pleasure of meeting him?'

'Mr. O'Neill is ill,' said Sir Gerald—'seriously ill. We are very anxious about him.'

'Really, I am greatly distressed,' said Browne. 'And you say he is seriously ill. I can't imagine anything more unfortunate, more entirely inartistic, than his death just at present.'

Neither Sir Gerald nor O'Dwyer had formally admitted the possibility of O'Neill's death, even in their own minds. Browne's reference to it, and still more the way in which he made it, jarred on them. O'Dwyer stood still and ejaculated, 'Damn!' Browne looked at him with an expression of innocent wonder.

‘Of course,’ he said, ‘no one would think of blaming O’Neill, especially if this illness should end—— Sir Gerald said it was serious, you know. I’m sure he will feel just as annoyed as we do. The whole thing has been badly managed; I mean, of course, by Providence or Fate, or whatever you like to call the power that arranges these matters. There has been a complete disregard of the dramatic requirements of the situation. We had got to such an interesting crisis. You gentlemen were fighting for Ireland against the Church. I think you would have been beaten; but there were splendid possibilities about the final scene. Now, in the very middle of the action the principal person steps off the stage, and very likely won’t return at all.’

Sir Gerald gripped O’Dwyer’s arm.

‘Let me speak to him,’ he whispered. ‘Mr. Browne,’ he said aloud, ‘Mr. O’Dwyer and I feel great anxiety about our friend. To us Mr. O’Neill’s illness is a personal sorrow. I am afraid we shall be very bad company for you. We shall not be able to appreciate your conversation as it deserves. Perhaps you would like me to order the trap to take you home at once.’

‘The very thing I was going to suggest myself. I am afraid I am not sympathetic; but the fact is, that I never could see the force of that aphorism of King Solomon’s about a house of mourning being better than a house of mirth. My experience is that, on these melancholy occasions, meals are apt to be neglected. The cook gets into the way of thinking

that any old scraps will do, and nobody rebukes her. Yes, if you and Mr. O'Dwyer really mean to mourn, I think I shall go at once.'

The Dublin doctor arrived in Clogher at one o'clock. He saw his patient, consulted with his colleague, and left again at two. In his opinion, there was no hope of recovery for John O'Neill. It was with his verdict before them that Sir Gerald and O'Dwyer discussed the future.

'He was a very great man,' said Sir Gerald.

'Yes,' said O'Dwyer, 'one of the greatest Irishmen. He might have been the very greatest, but he made one mistake—a mistake so important that it spoiled his work.'

'I am surprised to hear you own that he was mistaken at all. I thought that you were a whole-hearted follower of his.'

'His position was in reality an impossible one. Nothing made it seem reasonable except the wonderful force of his own will. He stood half-way between Isaac Butt and Wolfe Tone, between a conservative loyalty to ancient ideals on the one hand, and republicanism on the other. I have often wondered which he really wanted—the Irish Constitution of 1782, or a Declaration of Independence, like that of the United States.'

'I think you have described his attitude rightly ; but are you sure it was a mistake? Such a compromise has its value—at least, for a time. For instance——' He paused.

‘For instance’—it was O’Dwyer who completed his sentence—‘it enabled him to draw you into his party from one side, and me from the other. You need not have hesitated to say so. I am not afraid of any name you can give me. I am a rebel in all but opportunity.’

‘That is what I meant. Surely it was something to have drawn us together. I consider that we are types.’

‘That is no doubt true. But have you considered what was to happen afterwards? Such an alliance could not last for very long. What, for instance, is to happen now? I do not think that you and I can go on fighting this election together.’

‘No,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I went down to O’Neill’s house to-day to tell him that I must withdraw.’

‘I am glad he never heard it. It would have hurt him, for he liked you.’

There was a long pause. O’Dwyer smoked steadily, with his eyes fixed on the fire. Sir Gerald drew his chair closer to Hester, who sat near him, and watched her face. The rain beat heavily against the windows. A gathering storm moaned in the wide chimney. The room grew slowly darker. At last Sir Gerald spoke again.

‘What do you mean to do?’ he said.

‘I?’ said O’Dwyer. ‘I shall resign my seat in Parliament, of course. Nothing took me there but O’Neill, and now there is nothing to keep me there.’

‘And then,’ asked Hester, ‘what will you do?’

He thought he saw a great pity for him in her face when she spoke. It touched him.

‘It is very kind of you to be interested in me,’ he said. ‘I shall go the States. I have some experience as a journalist. I have no doubt that I shall be able to earn enough to keep me.’

‘That is not what I meant,’ said Hester. ‘I do not think you will be content just to *live*. What will you *do*?’

‘There is very little that I can do. I shall try to organize our people there and keep the Irish spirit alive in them. I shall teach them, if they will listen to me, to hate England and everything English.’

Hester shivered. This confession of faith in a gospel of hatred came so simply from his lips that it seemed terrible, much more terrible than any flight of rhetoric.

‘Chiefly, of course,’ said O’Dwyer, ‘my work will be to wait and watch.’

‘To wait for what?’ asked Sir Gerald.

‘For our opportunity. No empire which the world has ever seen has had in it the element of permanence. Least of all does it seem possible for the British Empire to last. Some day a shot will strike the hulk between the wind and water. That will be our opportunity. The final catastrophe will come with incredible swiftness, because there will be a people here at England’s very doors who hate her. These enemies of hers will also be across the sea under other flags and under her own flag. They will be even in the streets of her own great towns.

It will not matter that they do not know each other, for there will be one desire in all their hearts. For myself, I have only one prayer—that I may live long enough to see the day.’

‘I cannot hope for such a time,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘I think—I am sure—that I love Ireland, too. I rather wish to think of her as taking her part in guiding the great Empire which, after all, she has had her share in building up.’

‘Have you not read history? How is such a hope possible after the story of the last seven hundred years? England has worked for our extinction. The instinct which led her to destroy us utterly was a true one. It is impossible that her people and ours can be knit together. One or other must disappear, and so far, in spite of fire, and sword, and exile, we are alive and strong. Our race persists.’

Sir Gerald realized the force and truth of what was said, and had no answer to make. It was O’Dwyer who broke the silence again.

‘This is gloomy talking,’ he said. ‘Let us turn to something brighter. Let us talk about your future. I believe you when you say that you love Ireland, too. What will you do for her?’

‘I do not think,’ said Sir Gerald, ‘that we shall escape the gloom by talking of what I shall do.’

O’Dwyer looked slowly round. He seemed to be trying to appreciate the value of the comfort and luxury which surrounded him. His eyes rested finally on Hester.

‘Yet I think,’ he said, ‘that your life ought to be a happy one.’

‘I am going to say what will sound to you like nonsense,’ said Sir Gerald. ‘The misery of my life lies in this—that it will be happy. I shall live here. I shall be loved, and warmed, and fed. I shall grow slowly older, and in the end I shall die peaceably. I shall be quite happy, but I shall do nothing. In the end I suppose I shall come to not even love Ireland.’

Hester took his hand in hers, and held it tightly while he spoke.

‘I can understand,’ said O’Dwyer, ‘that, after all, I need not envy you.’

Two days afterwards John O’Neill died.

## CHAPTER XXIII

DESMOND O'HARA had a playful habit, not always appreciated by his friends, of answering his private letters in the columns of his paper. In this way he added a personal interest to *The Critic*, and knit his circle of readers into a kind of large house-party. He frequently accepted invitations, for instance, in this public way, and it was amusing to read that he intended to spend a week with Mrs. R. in Donegal, or three days with 'dear F.' in Wicklow, with the proviso that he was not to be taken out for picnics on wet days.

Thus, it happened that it was in the columns of *The Critic* that Sir Gerald found the answer to the appeal for advice which he had sent the day before the disastrous fiasco on the road to Ross.

'Dear G. G.,' he read, 'I can sympathize with you in your present position. I am on the whole inclined to think, as you evidently do, that at present politics are no game for a gentleman to play. Do you ever read the prophet Jeremiah? Probably not. I read a few chapters last night, and came across a verse which seemed to me to apply to the present condition

of Ireland. "I see a seething pot, and the face of it is towards the north." I remember, dear G. G., that, when I was staying with you in your beautiful West, we one day took shelter from a shower in a peasant's cabin. Although it was summer, there was a great fire of turf piled up into the wide chimney. A pot, a real iron caldron, the like of which one does not see in the degenerate kitchens of civilization, hung over the fire from an iron hook. It boiled—"seethed," Jeremiah would have said—violently. Now and then it overflowed, and some of its contents fell hissing into the fire. I remember that the smell of it did not strike us as savoury. I understand that it is the least pleasant portion of the contents—the scum, in fact—which boils over the edge of these pots on to the feet of the unwary. The recollection of that pot helped me to understand the vision of the prophet, and gave me an illustration of Ireland and her politics. For we are a seething pot—we, the Irish people.

‘Just now it is the scum which is coming malodorously to the surface, and perhaps scalding your hands and feet. Yet within the pot there is good stuff. It may be dinner “for the childer,” to make them grow into men and women; it may be food for the men to make them strong; it may be fattening for the less honourable beasts of the field. It is, at all events, the raw material of life. Far better it is to be sitting beside a seething pot than a stagnant pool. Dear G. G., let us keep the pot seething if we can. Let us do our

little part in this dear Ireland of ours to stir men into the activities of thought and ambition. If we get our toes burnt and our fingers grimy, let us put up with it bravely. If there is a nasty smell, we shall remember that there is good food in the caldron.

‘Do you remember the first time we met each other, nearly a year ago now? I fancy that it was I who first showed you how the Irish pot was seething. I think that you regarded some of the things I said to you as very foolish. No, dear G. G., you did not say so. You were too polite for that. I only guessed that you thought so. Among these foolish things there were two especially. I said that Ireland wanted her gentlemen, and that Ireland wanted a King. Do you still think me foolish? Perhaps I am. But I am surer than ever now that it is only a King, a King with an aristocracy to help him, who can deal with our seething pot. Only he must really be a King, and he must be brave enough to take off the spectacles which official people put upon the eyes of Kings, and look straight at us with the good clear eyes that God has given him. And he must surely be the King of Ireland, not a foreigner looking curiously at a strange people. Shall we ever find such a King? Sometimes I am not very hopeful, and the pot seethes very confusedly. Yet I think, dear G. G., that we ought to hope.

‘You will not be angry with me for my parable of the seething pot. It is not mine, you know, but the

prophet's. I have only fitted it to Ireland—our dear Ireland, which we love best of all things, in spite—— Would we love Ireland so well as we do if we had not got to love her in spite of her breaking our hearts ?

THE END









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